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# Human Rights Act under threat

Furious disability campaigners and activists have attacked the Conservative Party's threat to rip up the Human Rights Act (HRA) if it gains power.

Tory leader David Cameron said he would "reform, replace or scrap" the act, even though it provides a raft of protections for disabled people.

He was criticising a High Court ruling not to deport nine refugees who hijacked a plane, because they faced a risk of torture if returned to Afghanistan.

Jeremy Hunt, Conservative shadow minister for disabled people, told *DN* the act was "a piece of bad legislation" and tearing it up "is an option".

He admitted the HRA had brought "significant benefits to disabled people" and said his party "would make sure that anything we did would preserve and protect the rights of disabled people", including possible new legislation to replace the act.

But the government has also criticised the way the HRA is operating.

The lord chancellor, Lord Falconer, said it would not scrap the act but needed to "be alert to the way human rights legislation is being applied and take action where necessary".

He said the government would consider whether new legislation was needed to "underline" that "public safety must come first".

Campaigners lined up to condemn the attacks on the act.

Tony Manwaring, chief executive of Scope, said: "I have very serious concerns about how these attacks on the act will impact on the rights of disabled people. Whilst we as a society might need to think through how we balance the rights of different groups, we should be very wary of saying anything that undermines the fundamental values of human rights."

"Scope's Time to Get Equal campaign is all about disabled people achieving equality. Equality is nothing if not about the human rights of disabled people, and anything which threatens those rights must be resisted."

**Valuable articles: Days after *DN* reported on the value of the HRA *(May news focus, right)* the Tories threatened to scrap it. Campaigners including Tara Flood *(above)* have condemned the threat**

18 News focus

You must fight for huma



Caroline Ellis, head of parliamentary affairs for the Disability Rights Commission, said scrapping the act would be "a disaster for disabled people" as it was "an absolutely essential tool to deliver equal citizenship".

She said it was vital not to weaken the act before next year's launch of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

Katie Ghose, director of the British Institute of Human Rights, said the act had been "a lifeline for disabled people" who had used it to "secure practical support in their homes and to challenge very poor treatment or abuse in residential care".

"Any weakening of the HRA will put yet another barrier in the way of disabled people... scrapping it altogether would be even worse and would be a major setback for disabled people's struggle to have their fundamental rights recognised."

Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education, said the HRA has been "far more liberating" than the Disability Discrimination Act, because people do not need to prove they are disabled before securing protection.

** See letters, page 14*

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# MPs call for incapacity benefit shake-up

Government proposals for incapacity benefit (IB) reform require sweeping changes if they are to succeed, say MPs.

The select committee on work and pensions' inquiry examined government plans to help more disabled people into work, including January's green paper on welfare reform*.

In its report**, released last month, the committee calls for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to invest greater "effort and resources" to move one million people off IB and into work over the next ten years.

The committee's recommendations urge the government to involve disabled people at every stage of the proposed reforms.

Disability campaigners welcomed the recommendations, one of which was for the government to put more resources into changing employers' attitudes towards recruiting disabled people.

Peter Cardy, chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, said there should be a stronger emphasis on supporting employers to recruit people with a range of impairments. He said: "This was a massive gap in the green paper and the report is the first step towards addressing it."

The report also calls on the DWP to urgently design the personal capability assessment (PCA) – which will decide if a person is eligible for the benefit – around "the complexity and reality of disabled people's lives, as well as the social elements of their disability".

Bethan Collins, of RADAR, said: "The new PCA should look to incorporate the social model of disability and concentrate on the person's ability to carry out various types of work."

Under the government's proposals, new claimants of the employment and support allowance – which will replace basic jobseekers allowance and IB – who are found to be fit to work, will be required to attend work-focused interviews or face a cut in benefits.

The committee criticises such sanctions, saying they would "damage the relationship of trust" between disabled people and their personal advisors.

The DWP said it was pleased the committee recognised it had "many of the building blocks in place" to see a million fewer people on IB. A welfare reform bill will be published later this year.

**A New Deal for Welfare, tel: 020 7219 3890 or visit www.dwp.gov.uk*

***Incapacity Benefit and Pathways to Work Report, tel: 020 7219 5833 or visit www.parliament.uk*

**On the cover: Douglas Campbell, first chair of Mobilise, promises a return to effective representation of disabled motorists. See front page of this year's motoring supplement *Get in Gear*. Picture by George Olney.**

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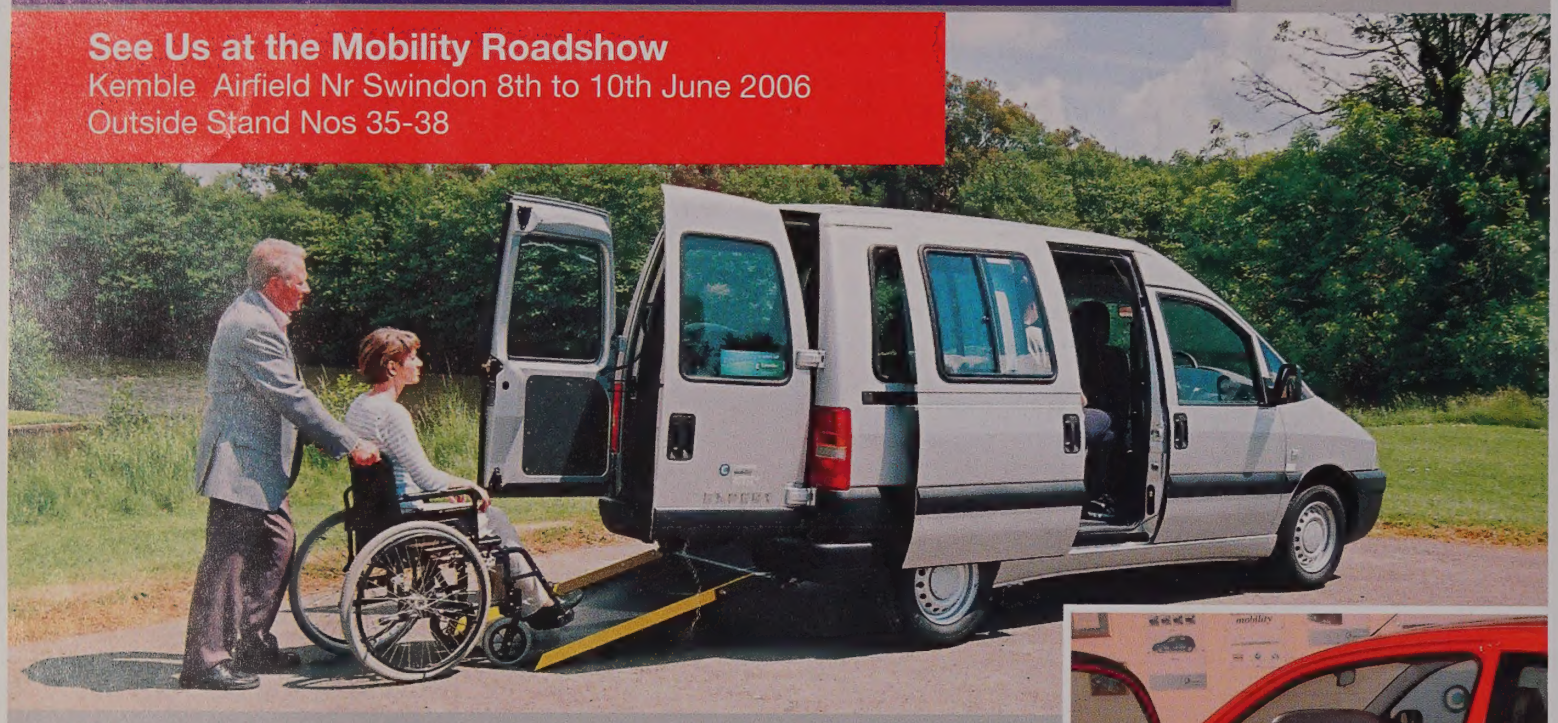

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# Government scraps abuse clause in secret

**DN CAMPAIGN**

EXCLUSIVE BY **JOHN PRING**

Health minister Rosie Winterton has secretly dumped a vital piece of legislation that would have protected many more vulnerable adults from abuse, *DN* has discovered.

The draft mental health bill included a clause that would have made it an offence for a person to ill-treat or neglect someone with a learning difficulty or mental health problem in their "care or custody". Existing laws only cover such offences in care homes and hospitals.

The bill would also have increased the maximum sentence from two to five years in prison, partly thanks to our Justice for Survivors campaign.

But following her decision to scrap the bill and instead amend existing mental health laws *(DN, May, page 7)*, a spokeswoman for Ms Winterton told *DN* that the new offence was "not one of the areas that we are hoping to achieve through other means".

She said: "We had to make some very difficult decisions about what was kept in and what fell out."

Kathryn Stone, chief executive of Voice UK, said she was "disappointed that the government has seen fit to drop this crucial and much needed offence".

In 2004, when the measure was announced, she described it as "a huge step forward" that would "massively raise protection and awareness of the abuse of vulnerable adults".

The decision to drop the new offence was also criticised by the Ann Craft Trust and Respond.

David Congdon, head of campaigns and policy at Mencap, said the charity would try to convince the government to reinstate the measure.

**Height of achievement: Simon Wilkins, from Leeds, was one of 18 deaf teens who enjoyed an extreme sports day organised by the National Deaf Children's Society at the Xscape centre in Castleford, west Yorkshire, in late April. Activities included snowboarding, an aerial assault course and a climbing wall.**

# DRC probes barriers to key jobs

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has launched a formal investigation into employment issues, following concerns about a lack of job opportunities for disabled people in three key public sectors.

The review will question service providers in the nursing, teaching and social work sectors to judge how they are complying with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

It follows anecdotal evidence obtained by the DRC that "things are not as they should be", with little research available on the numbers of disabled people in these types of jobs.

The 12-month investigation will ask how training, qualifying and working practices may be posing challenges to the entry and progress of disabled people.

DRC chairman Bert Massie said such "highly regulated professions" were presenting a barrier to some disabled people and those with long-term health conditions.

The DRC is expected to make recommendations next summer.

# Call for government to end funding crisis

Key disability groups were due to meet as *DN* went to press to discuss the funding crisis faced by organisations run by disabled people.

The meeting, organised by the Disability Rights Commission, Disability Awareness in Action, the National Centre for Independent Living and the British Council of Disabled People, was to discuss concerns about the continuing threat to user-led organisations.

Anne McGuire, the minister for disabled people, was invited to the meeting but a Department for Work and Pensions spokeswoman said she would not attend.

It came after Danny Alexander MP, the Liberal Democrat disability spokesman, asked the government why it was failing to support the recommendation in its *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* report to have a Centre for Independent Living (CIL) in each local authority area.

During a Commons debate*, he pointed to a *DN* survey that found many CILs were threatened by a loss of funding *(DN, May, page 1)*.

Meanwhile, the Coalition of Disabled People in Birmingham was due to close as *DN* went to press, citing a lack of funds.

.And at an Office of Disability Issues conference last month, Andrew Lee, director of People First, asked Anne McGuire what would be done about the problem.

Mrs McGuire said she would take up the issue with Ivan Lewis, the new care services minister.

*See page six

# Government denies plans to scrap scheme

The government has denied any plans to scrap the Independent Living Funds (ILF), following its decision to review the scheme.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) said the review would "make recommendations for the future direction of the funds", which support severely disabled people to live independently in the community.

This raised fears that the ILF could be scrapped, but a DWP spokeswoman said: "The review is normal practice and is required under Cabinet Office (CO) guidelines. There is absolutely no agenda to scrap the Independent Living Funds."

Lorna Reith, chief executive of Disability Alliance, called for the DWP to gather the views of disabled people and their organisations during the six-month review, expected to begin this month.


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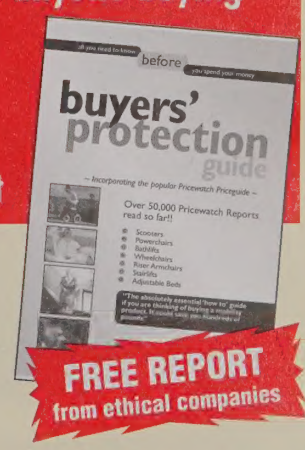


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# Europe's access coup

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

A new agreement is set to transform access for disabled people in cities, public buildings and transport systems across Europe.

The new European Union (EU) funding regulations, agreed last month, mean EU countries must consider access for disabled people and anti-discrimination issues before receiving EU Structural Funds (SF) for new projects.

The funds make up a third of the EU budget and are used for environmental projects, employment services, urban renewal, education and cultural developments.

The European Disability Forum (EDF)* welcomed the agreement by EU financial ministers, which followed more than two years of negotiations.

Yannis Vardakastanis, EDF president, said: "The potential impact of this political agreement is so significant that it will change the face of our cities, our public buildings and transport systems."

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne, vice-president of the disability all-party intergroup, said the agreement sent a strong message to member states about discriminating against disabled people.

The new regulations are expected to be voted through the European Parliament next month and come into force days later.

**www.edf-feph.org*

# 'Inclusion hurts some children'

Disability groups have criticised a new report that suggests current inclusive education practices could harm some children with complex needs.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has called for a debate on the National Union of Teachers (NUT) report*, which says mainstream settings are "difficult or even threatening" for some children with special educational needs (SEN).

The report, by academics at Cambridge University, cited a lack of SEN training for teachers and said even one pupil with complex needs in a class, without appropriate support, could disrupt learning "for all".

Steve Sinnot, NUT general secretary, said SEN pupils were being let down by "inclusion on the cheap" and called for a halt to the closure of special schools.

Bert Massie, DRC chairman, said: "Disabled people have fought hard to establish support for their full inclusion in society. There can be no turning back from this."

Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education, criticised the government for "delivering second-rate integration" rather than inclusion.

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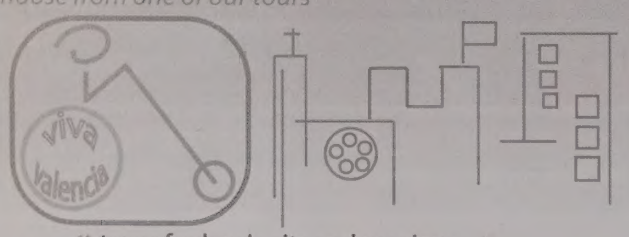

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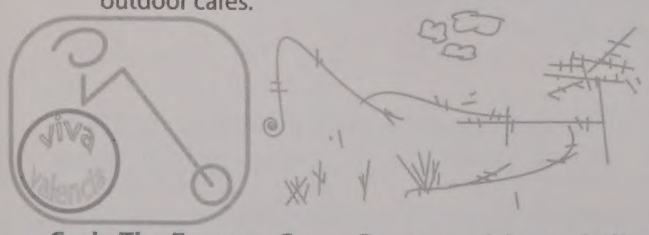

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Activists who lobbied a minister's constituency surgery have warned that the government's welfare reform plans are inspiring a new generation of direct action protesters.

Members of the Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN) chanted slogans and handed out leaflets *(above)* outside a surgery in Barking, east London, run by Margaret Hodge MP, minister for employment and welfare reform*.

Previous protests focused on issues such as inaccessible public transport but DAN has been quiet in recent months.

The protest in late April called for a more "flexible and realistic approach" to work and benefits, and highlighted the threat of benefit cuts and disabled people being forced into low-paid work.

Stuart MacLoud, from east London, was given two minutes with Mrs Hodge. He said she was surprised DAN had taken a negative view of the reforms.

Protester Mike Higgins, from Sheffield, said the movement had been in "temporary decline" for ten years, but had experienced a "resurgence" because of the reforms.

The Sheffield Welfare Action Network will lobby the Department for Work and Pensions' Sheffield offices later this month**.

** She has since been replaced by Jim Murphy*

***For details, email m.j.higgins @blueyonder.co.uk*

# Public sector 'must be ready'

The public sector must prepare for the impending Disability Equality Duty (DED) or face the consequences, policy-makers warned last month.

The recommendation came at the first conference hosted by the government's new Office of Disability Issues (ODI), which aimed to raise awareness among public bodies of how to meet the needs of disabled people before the new duty comes into force in December.

The minister for disabled people, Anne McGuire, told the conference: "It's not enough for central government alone to get its house in order. We need our partners in local government, in the NHS, and in other branches of the public sector, to work with us to transform the experience of disabled people."

Marie Pye, head of DED at the Disability Rights Commission, said public bodies must involve disabled people in producing disability equality schemes (DES).


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## In brief

### No new Gulf Syndrome

Two studies have found no evidence of a new "Gulf War Syndrome" among UK forces currently serving in Iraq.

Researchers from the King's Centre for Military Health Research also found no increase in mental health problems among UK troops as a result of serving in Iraq.

But the government-funded research did find reservists who served in Iraq experienced more mental health problems than regular forces. The government announced a new mental healthcare programme for reservists returning from service overseas.

### Embryo tests extended

The UK's fertility watchdog increased the number of genetic conditions for which embryos can be screened before being implanted by fertility clinics.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) decided that approved clinics could now offer tests to couples with a family history of certain rare, inherited breast, ovarian and bowel cancers.

There are now about 50 inherited conditions that approved clinics can test for, such as forms of muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis.

### Trains must be pulled

A train company was told to withdraw a fleet of trains six months early because the letters on its information screens were too small.

South West Trains had asked the government to extend its exemption from access regulations by six months. But the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee recommended the request be denied.

The 28 Juniper trains were used as emergency back-up between Reading and Waterloo. They will be withdrawn next month.

### Talking therapies boosted

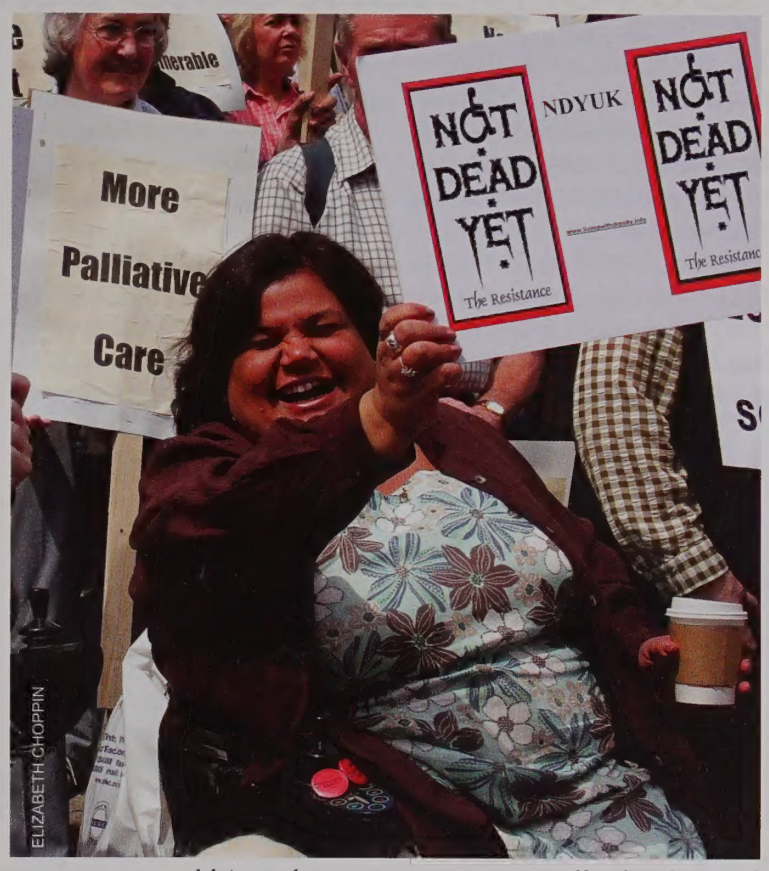
Two new pilot schemes could lead to greater availability of counselling and talking therapies for people with mild to moderate depression.

Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt said she hoped the pilot sites in Doncaster and Newham would provide "real, tangible evidence of the effectiveness of investing in talking therapies" and reduce the use of drugs.

Charities Mind and Rethink welcomed the announcement and said they hoped it would be extended to cover the entire population.

# Fighting for life

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**




Peers blocked Lord Joffe's assisted dying bill on the same day that hundreds of people, including a newly formed coalition of disabled people, demonstrated outside parliament.

The demonstration followed the launch of Not Dead Yet UK (NDY UK), a new campaigning network of disabled people and organisations opposed to the bill, which teamed up with the Care Not Killing Alliance to deliver a petition of 100,000 signatures to 10 Downing Street.

Jane Campbell, NDY UK organiser, said: "By singling us out for legalised killing, it feeds the myth that our lives are not worth living. If assisted dying is legalised it will create pressure, particularly on those who are newly disabled, to end their lives.

"If they really want to help us, Lord Joffe and other people of influence should turn their attention to campaigning for proper health and social care support."

Menghi Mulchandani *(pictured)*, co-chair of the National Centre for Independent Living, said: "The bill is dangerous. When people are supported, people want to live. When palliative services are not what they should be is when people want to die."

The chairman of Care Not Killing Alliance, Brian Iddon MP, said he feared Lord Joffe's supporters would introduce a similar bill in the Commons, which could secure stronger support than in the Lords.

A spokesman for Dignity in Dying (previously the Voluntary Euthanasia Society) said: "The bill will be back in one form or another, regardless of what route it takes, in the not too distant future – certainly within 12 months."

During the Lords debate, Lord Joffe said: "As a caring society, we cannot sit back and complacently accept that terminally ill patients who are suffering unbearably should simply continue to suffer for the good of society as a whole."

But Baroness Wilkins, who is disabled, said that no disabled people's organisation had backed the bill, despite high profile individual cases.

She said: "If it were to succeed, it would remove the cornerstone of our law that protects us when we are at our most vulnerable. If we cross that threshold, society's attitude will inevitably change."

An amendment for the bill to return to the Lords in six months was passed by 148 votes to 100.

# Parents on their own

Half of parents with learning difficulties have had their children taken away from them, according to new research.

The study by Bristol University's Norah Fry Research Centre, published last month, revealed an increasing number of adults with learning difficulties are becoming parents, but face "negative attitudes" and a "range of barriers" to appropriate support.

Effective support includes help at home and early identification of needs, said the report.

Co-author Beth Tarleton said: "If you put in the right support for parents, then actually you're protecting the child by helping parents be parents."

Alison Giraud-Saunders, co-director of the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, said GPs, care staff and family services must work together to support parents with learning difficulties. She said: "We must all start from the principle that the child will usually be best off with its parents."

Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission, condemned the "lack of rights" to challenge the decision to take a child away from parents with learning difficulties. He added: "Too often the chosen solution is to take the child away."

The Baring Foundation, which funded the research, has given £120,000 for a follow-on project to lobby policymakers and set up a network of professionals to share good practice.

**Finding the right support? A review of issues and positive practice in supporting parents with learning difficulties and their children, tel: 0117 331 0987 or visit www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry*

# Boost for assistive technology

A ground-breaking assistive technology website has been hailed as a "massive leap forward" for disabled people.

Free software on the Open Source Assistive Technology Software (OATS) website* will help disabled people access computers and the internet.

The software is open source, allowing anyone to alter it to meet the specific requirements of disabled people.

The site, run by charity ACE Centre Advisory Trust, is the first to offer a range of open source software, saving disabled people from trawling through multiple sites to find a solution to their needs.

David Banes, director of operations at AbilityNet, hailed the website as a "massive leap forward" in assistive technology.

"What we would like to see is for this to be expanded, so that they don't only have free solutions but demos of paid-for solutions, to give people choice."

**www.oatsoft.org; for more information, call ACE Centre, tel: 01865 759 800 or visit www.ace-centre.org.uk*

# Disabled minister resigns

A disabled minister has quit the government in the reshuffle that followed Labour's poor local election results.

Fiona Mactaggart resigned as a junior home office minister to concentrate on her constituency work.

Ms Mactaggart, who has multiple sclerosis, told a local paper in her Slough constituency that her ministerial post had been a "19 hours a day, seven days a week job, and I need a rest".

The reshuffle also saw Ivan Lewis take over from Liam Byrne as minister for care services at the Department of Health. Mr Lewis has a background in the voluntary sector.

In the Department for Work and Pensions, Margaret Hodge, the minister in charge of incapacity benefit reform, was replaced by Jim Murphy.

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Attendance was sparse as MPs debated the government's disability policies last month, but the debate did cover a range of issues, including incapacity benefit reform, red tape and inaccessible cinemas. John Pring reports

# Labour scolded for marginalising debate

The government has come under fire for holding a debate on disability issues on an election day for the second time.

Ministers were criticised two years ago when they held their previous adjournment debate on disability on the day of European Parliament elections.

MPs of all parties were again critical when this year's Commons debate on the government's policies on improving the life chances of disabled people was held on 4 May, the day of the council elections.

Reports suggest only about 30 MPs attended the debate.

Former Conservative disability spokesman Tim Boswell said the government "must not get into the habit of using disability issues as a convenient filler on election days".

He said: "It would be difficult to send a more eloquent signal of the marginalisation of disability issues."

Liberal Democrat disability spokesman Danny Alexander also criticised the decision.

And Labour MP Roger Berry, a leading campaigner on disability rights, said: "I very much welcome today's debate, if not the date on which it is being held."

# 'Government sets bad example'

The government must match its words with action if it is to deliver independent living for disabled people, according to the Conservative's disability spokesman.

Jeremy Hunt told the debate that "results must match rhetoric" and the government had failed in "practical action" rather than legislation.

He also said the government had failed to set an example as an employer of disabled people, with public sector organisations often less flexible than the private sector in making reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

He criticised the delivery of services to disabled people, with social services too burdened with bureaucracy and regulations.

He said: "How can anyone possibly expect social services to concentrate on delivering good services for their disabled clients when their heads must be spinning with all the reports they must write?"

And he pointed to *DN*'s story about an abuse victim allegedly abused at two further care homes *(DN, May, page 3)*, and called on the government to do more to tackle abuse.

**Intense debate:** *(Pictured left to right)* **Anne Begg, Jeremy Hunt and Danny Alexander**

# Cinemas dodge DDA

A disabled Labour MP told the debate how she was turned away from three London cinemas because of access problems.

Anne Begg, who uses a wheelchair, was unable to see three different films in three West End cinemas on Easter Monday.

She said the experience was "an incredible shock". "I have not been refused access to a cinema for almost 20 years."

She visited Cineworld in Shaftesbury Avenue, the Odeon West End and the Odeon Leicester Square, and was told each time she could not access the film she wanted to see.

At Cineworld, the lift was broken, and the others had access only to certain screens.

She said: "I was shocked to find that the cinemas in London have got round the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by saying that because at least one of their screens is accessible, they have made reasonable adjustments."

She has written to Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ask what powers they have to force cinemas to fulfil their obligations under the DDA.

# Work scheme must be promoted

The government needs to start "shouting from the rooftops" about the success of its Access to Work scheme, according to the Liberal Democrat disability spokesman.

Danny Alexander said the scheme, which provides support for disabled people to stay in work, was one of the government's "great unsung success stories".

He said the scheme provided a net benefit to the economy of £3,000 per person, but four in five small businesses did not know about it.

Labour MP Roger Berry said there was widespread agreement among disability organisations that it needed more funds.

Tim Boswell, a former Conservative disability spokesman, added. "It is frankly a hidden treasure and I fear that that is so because if it were not it would cost too much on ministerial budgets."

Mr Alexander also said the green paper on welfare reform was "short on detail", and called for a legal right to "rehabilitation leave" when someone in work becomes disabled.

He said the £360million allocated to extend the Pathways to Work scheme across the country was "simply not enough".

Mr Alexander also named four departments which have failed to appoint a minister to liaise with the Office for Disability Issues: the Department for International Development, the Cabinet Office, the Northern Ireland Office and the Treasury.


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# McGuire: Labour has 'delivered'

The minister for disabled people told the debate that the government's record on extending rights to disabled people was "without parallel".

Anne McGuire said Labour had "overseen the largest extension of disability rights in history, but we refuse to rest on our laurels".

"We still have to challenge the view that sees what disabled people cannot do, rather than what they can do.

"We are delivering on a strategy to improve the life chances of disabled people, but we still have a long way to go in changing society's attitudes."

Mrs McGuire also told the debate that she and other Scottish MPs now boycott any parliamentary receptions which are inaccessible to Anne Begg, who uses a wheelchair.

# New task force chair breaks ground

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

The government has made its first appointment of a person with learning difficulties as a national "tsar".

Nicola Smith *(pictured)*, from West Sussex, will take up her post as co-chair of the Learning Disability Task Force alongside the current national director for learning disabilities, Rob Greig.

She told *DN* that ten years of advocacy experience had helped prepare her for the new job.

Ms Smith said she would like to ensure people with learning difficulties have the right to choose where they live and have more meaningful employment opportunities. She also wants to see more support for parents with learning difficulties.

She said: "Carers who have a learning disability and have children have the same rights as everybody else. They should not have them taken away."

She added that her appointment "sends a message that we're having more opportunities. People are listening to us".

## Schools ignorant of epilepsy

More than a quarter of schools are not aware of how many of their pupils have epilepsy, according to a new survey.

The research, by charity Epilepsy Action (EA), was launched last month as part of National Epilepsy Week*.

Less than a quarter of the 288 primary and secondary schools involved felt their staff's level of epilepsy awareness was good. But almost 50 per cent admitted that epilepsy could greatly affect a pupil's performance.

According to EA, one in 214 children of school age is affected by the condition.

EA's education policy and campaigns officer, Elizabeth Anderson, said: "These figures clearly illustrate the fact that many children with epilepsy are struggling unnecessarily at school while much more could be done to help them."

**For information, tel: 0808 800 5050 or visit www.epilepsy.org.uk*

## Scooter scrutiny

A disabled student is outraged after being forced to have a risk assessment before he could drive a scooter on his college campus.

Walsall College told business student Naresh Kumar, 20, that his driving skills and insurance needed to be checked before he could use his new scooter.

Mr Kumar said: "If I can drive an electric wheelchair [without being risk assessed], then I should be able to drive a mobility scooter."

After agreeing to the assessment, Mr Kumar was granted permission to use the scooter.

A spokesman for Walsall College said it was standard policy to carry out risk assessments on new equipment introduced to the college.

He added: "The last thing we would want is to put up barriers to students. We just want to make sure we comply with health and safety policy."


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Open house: *DN* counsellor Lin Berwick enjoys the opening of Denis Duncan House in Dirleton, near Edinburgh, in April. The accessible holiday cottage is the second built by the Lin Berwick Trust. Dr Berwick was joined by husband Ralph *(seated)*, the Rev Dr Denis Duncan and the Duchess of Hamilton. *To book, tel: 01787 372343 or visit www.thelinberwicktrust.org.uk*

# Activity centre evicted

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

A computer-based activity centre for nearly 100 disabled people faces closure unless it can raise £1million by the end of October.

Last year, the 20-year-old centre, run by Kent charity COMPAID Trust, which provides therapeutic, educational and recreational activities, was told it would be evicted from its rent-free home at Pembury Hospital to make way for a redevelopment.

Barry O'Sullivan, COMPAID's fundraising manager, said the charity was assured at the beginning of 2005 that the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTWT) would provide temporary space in the grounds of the hospital in Tunbridge Wells and provide £100,000 to help with relocation.

But Mr O'Sullivan said the offer was withdrawn last August and an eviction notice served in November.

He said: "We felt that what seemed too good to be true actually was too good to be true."

An appeal was launched in April, but only £20,000 has been raised so far.

Mr O'Sullivan said the charity would need £1million to find a new home and cover costs, but £500,000 would greatly help to keep the charity running*.

An MTWT spokeswoman said all services were being moved off the site so the hospital could be demolished and rebuilt by 2010.

She said COMPAID would be allowed to stay on-site as long as possible and the trust was working with it to ensure its future.

She admitted the trust had allocated money to COMPAID but withdrew it when relocation within its grounds was no longer possible.

**For more information, tel: 01892 824 060 or visit www.savecompaid.co.uk*

# 'Digital divide' tackled

Disabled people may face fewer barriers to technology, after the launch of a new charter.

The eAccessibility charter*, developed by the RNID, the Disabled Living Foundation and IT consultancy Scientific Generics, sets out practical recommendations for the industry so disabled people can get better access to technology products and services such as mobile phones, digital television and the internet.

Guido Dybels, director of new technology for RNID, said accessible technology was vital for disabled people to take part in education and employment and enjoy their social lives.

He said: "We think bringing all the information together will really move things forward."

Conservative disability spokesman, Jeremy Hunt, said the charter would "take the bull by the horns" and tackle the "digital divide" facing disabled people.

The charter was funded by the Alliance for Digital Inclusion.

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# Deaf people's workforce woes

Only 63 per cent of deaf and hard of hearing people have jobs, compared with three-quarters of the national workforce, according to an RNID survey.

The survey found that more than half of those with jobs believed their deafness had held them back from promotions and that they felt isolated at work.

The survey of 915 deaf and hearing-impaired people also found that two in five employers did not provide any deaf awareness training.

Director of RNID's employment training and skills service, Cheryl Cullen, said: "Every deaf and hard of hearing person is capable of working, with the right support.

"At a time of real skills shortages in key sectors of the economy, the country cannot afford to neglect the vast pool of talent represented by deaf and hard of hearing people."

# Volunteer banned from visiting friend

A local authority has refused to allow a whistleblower to visit a disabled woman she befriended while volunteering at a long-stay hospital.

Wakefield council has banned Elizabeth Nassem from visiting A, a former patient at Fieldhead Hospital, who has learning difficulties.

Miss Nassem repeatedly complained to the authorities about standards on the ward on which A was living, but has not been able to visit her since 2003.

The council refused to withdraw the ban after receiving an assessment by a clinical psychologist, who decided that A does not have the capacity to decide who she should have contact with.

Miss Nassem said she felt "very upset".

"I cannot believe that they can be so cruel. It has completely changed my view of how I see professionals."

Jean Collins, director of learning difficulties charity Values Into Action, said the decision was a clear breach of A's human rights.

She said the council should have observed how A reacts in Miss Nassem's company.

She added: "We know from the bitter experience of people with learning difficulties that they are at their safest when they have access to people from a range of backgrounds."

The council declined to comment.

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# New schemes will recruit disabled people into media

**DN CAMPAIGN**

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

The number of disabled people working in the media is set to increase, thanks to a wide-ranging new diversity programme.

The £3million Audio Visual Entrepreneurship (AVE) programme* will include more than 20 pilot projects across the television, radio and film industries and help about 600 people from under-represented groups, including disabled people.

It was launched last month by the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries (Skillset) and the UK Film Council.

The pilot projects, such as work placement and mentoring schemes, will be run by broadcasters and media companies. They aim to develop skills and boost career potential.

According to a Skillset survey, only five per cent of the media industry workforce is disabled.

One of the projects aimed towards disabled people is a production trainee scheme from Channel 4. Starting this summer, it will recruit eight disabled people for a six-month training programme, to include mentoring and work placements.

Asma Shah, Channel 4's talent development advisor, said: "It's important we recruit from as wide a pool as possible, and in some cases that means targeted recruitment."

At the launch, Trevor Phillips, chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, said: "What I hope these projects will do is change the way the industry itself works.

"The audiovisual sector is one way we tell our national story. If the national story is only being told by a relatively partial bit of our population, it isn't our national story and we aren't doing our job."

** For more information, tel: 020 7520 5757 or visit www.skillset.org*

# Lottery boost for children's services

A new lottery-funded project will help childcare services in Edinburgh open their doors to families with disabled children.

Edinburgh Childcare 4 All will work with staff in nurseries, playgroups and out-of-school clubs to help make their services accessible to disabled children up to the age of 12.

The new scheme, developed by Capability Scotland and Lothian Autistic Society, has been funded by a £200,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund, and will help providers that already include disabled children as well as those with no such experience.

Capability Scotland research in 2003 found childcare providers lacked the knowledge, confidence and resources to offer places to disabled children.

# Independent living scheme struggling

A decline in funding and inconsistent levels of support from councils is hindering a programme designed to help disabled people live independently, according to a new report.

Launched in April 2003, the Supporting People programme provides funding for councils to co-ordinate support and arrange housing for disabled people.

But last month's report* by the Commission for Social Care Inspection says the programme, costing £8billion, has had "mixed success" because of a reduction in the government's Supporting People grant.

And while the programme has allowed many adults with mental health problems to live independently, the report says there are "still gaps in services", such as a lack of "supported housing", which has seen people placed in accommodation for homeless people.

The inspectors also called for a "radical review" of supported housing for adults with learning difficulties, as concerns mount over high costs and how people are supported.

A spokesman for the Department for Communities and Local Government said the report did not "reflect the achievements of the programme and the work which is being done to address some of the issues raised in the report".

**Supporting People – promoting independence, tel: 0845 015 0120 or email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk*

Branching out: Three disabled tenants in the garden of their bungalow in Horsham, Sussex, help with a new Southdown Housing Association tree planting scheme. Pictured are *(from left)* tenants David Sorrell, Alec Gray and Martin Clilverd, and Southdown's chief executive Aideen Jones w*(back)*.

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# ME research call

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Disability campaigners have called on the government to plough greater resources into finding a treatment for ME, following claims of misdiagnosis and mistreatment by the NHS.

The 25% ME Group, which represents people with the most severe forms of the condition, accused the government of "wasting millions on inappropriate treatment" by using psychological therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy to help treat patients with ME.

The group said: "The government has chosen to pour many millions of pounds worth of public money into funding psychologically-based treatments and management strategy therapies, which simply do not work for ME patients and indeed can cause more harm to ME sufferers."

The national support group claims 95 per cent of its members who had tried such therapies reported a worsening of their symptoms.

Instead, it is calling for the government to redirect resources into researching the physical causes of the illness, which they say is currently being funded through private donations.

Action for ME, another ME charity, said psychological therapies can help "as a coping strategy to manage the illness", but reinforced calls for "fully funded biomedical research".

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health said: "It is for clinicians to decide how best to treat their patients."

She said the government had invested £8.5million in Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME services via the Medical Research Council (MRC).

The MRC said it would fund proposals which had an "alternative approach" but that nothing of sufficient quality had yet been proposed.

Talking technology: Author and IT expert Dr Michael Chorust meets ten-year-old Bradley Wilson, who has just had his second cochlear implant, at Queens Medical Centre in Nottingham last month. Dr Chorust, who has one implant and is considering a second, was giving a lecture about cochlear implant technology for the charity The Ear Foundation.

# Heart care boost

People with congenital heart conditions could soon benefit from better care, thanks to new guidance* from the Department of Health.

The guidelines say patients should expect to be treated by staff with the right expertise and find it easier to make the transition from children's to adults' services.

Launching the guidance last month, health minister Rosie Winterton said the initiative would ensure patients receive "consistent, expert and co-ordinated care from the NHS".

The British Heart Foundation welcomed the guidance but said investment and training would be needed.

** For a copy of the commissioning guide for young people and grown ups with congenital heart disease, tel: 020 7210 4850 or visit www.dh.gov.uk*

# MS drug set for approval

Thousands of disabled people with severe forms of multiple sclerosis (MS) could benefit from a new drug, if it is approved by the European Union (EU) this summer.

The Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP), the scientific committee of the European Medicines Agency, has recommended that the drug Tysabri should be made available on prescription across the EU.

If the recommendation is approved, the new drug could help thousands of patients with relapsing and remitting MS across Europe, who don't benefit from treatment with beta-interferon.

The drug can also delay the progression of disability and reduce the frequency of relapses, according to the MS Trust.

Tysabri was taken off the US market in February last year, when three of the 3,000 people taking part in a trial developed progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, a disorder of the nervous system.

But the US Food and Drug Administration is considering its re-introduction, following a recommendation from its advisory committee.

A final decision on use in Europe is expected this summer from the European Commission.

Nicola Russell, director of services for the MS Trust, welcomed the CHMP's recommendation.

She said: "People with MS should be given the option of disease modifying drugs before nerve damage is caused, so the earlier the treatment is given, the better."

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The Disability Equality Duty for the public sector comes into force in December 2006, and has important implications for all local authorities. The DED is more than changes to buildings or adjustments for individuals, it's about including equality for disabled people, both as employers and service users, into the culture of your organisation in pro-active and demonstrated ways.

This one-day conference is aimed at chief executives and directors of strategy, performance, HR, training and of departments providing services in social care, planning, highways, environment, leisure and culture and community/neighbourhood services. It will update delegates on the DED and give an outline of the forthcoming guidance for local government to be published by the Disability Rights Commission. It will also look at ways in which authorities can prepare for the new Duty, including the statutory requirement to produce a Disability Equality Scheme

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# NHS scheme to improve deaf awareness

Deaf and hard of hearing people in England could find it easier to communicate with healthcare professionals, if a government-funded initiative is successful.

The new scheme will provide training to healthcare staff who have direct contact with people with hearing impairments.

It follows a string of reports that highlighted the problems faced by deaf and hard of hearing people when attending hospital appointments.

In 2004, an RNID report found that 42 per cent of deaf or hard of hearing people who visited hospitals in a non-emergency capacity found it difficult to communicate with NHS staff.

The Department of Health-funded initiative will provide nationally accredited communication skills for up to 4,000 NHS staff and is being co-ordinated by the UK Council on Deafness.

British athletes bagged medals and records at the Visa Paralympic World Cup in Manchester. John Stanton reports

# Court success for GB teams

British wheelchair basketball looks set to enjoy a bright future after Paralympic World Cup medals for both the men's and women's teams.

Competing without several experienced players, Great Britain's men's team took a bronze medal, while the women won silver.

The men, reigning World Cup champions, beat Sweden 51-34 to win bronze, with gold going to Canada.

Terry Bywater, who has competed in two Paralympic Games, said: "I'm absolutely ecstatic. When you wear the GB vest and win a medal, you have to be over the moon. This medal means just as much to me as the gold medal last year."

Head coach Dave Titmuss was delighted with the performance of his young team. He said: "I think 10 of the 12 guys we had here will be available for London 2012."

The women's team went one better, but lost a hard-fought final 37-22 to Mexico. They also fielded a young team.

Great Britain team member Ann Wild said: "We did an incredibly good job, especially with our rookies. We're looking towards London 2012 with these young players."

# Medal haul for swimmers

British Paralympic athletes continued to shine in the pool, taking five golds, two silvers and two bronze medals.

Jim Anderson set two European records and claimed gold in the S2 50m freestyle, beating world record holder Curtis Lovejoy.

He said: "I had no idea I would get the European record, it's a real surprise. I've been training well and the crowd kept me going and pushed me all the way."

Andrew Lindsay narrowly missed out on breaking his own world record but went on to win the S7 100m backstroke.

Lindsay, Matthew Walker *(pictured)*, David Hill and James Crisp stormed to victory in the 4x50m multi-disability freestyle relay, finishing more than six seconds ahead of closest rivals Brazil.

PAUL THOMAS – SPORTSBEAT IMAGES

James Crisp later won silver in the S9 100m backstroke.

Sascha Kindred won gold in the S7 50m butterfly, while Matthew Walker did the same in the S7 50m freestyle event.

Natalie Jones produced the best performance by a British woman, taking silver in the S6 50m freestyle.

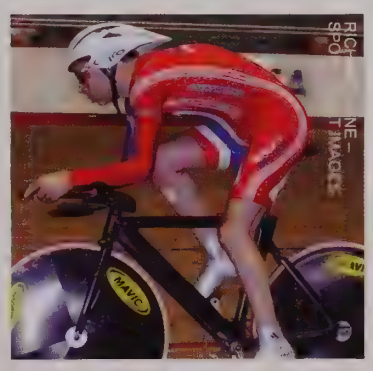
Medals also went to Anthony Stephens and Claire Cashmore, who both won bronze.

# Team's seven cycling golds

Great Britain's cyclists left the Manchester Velodrome with seven gold medals and five world records.

Darren Kenny *(pictured)* led the way for the hosts, winning three golds and breaking two world records.

The Dorset rider, who twice won gold at the Athens Paralympic Games in 2004, won the LC3 3000m pursuit gold before taking more than a second off his world record in the LC3 1km time trial.



Kenny also joined Jody Cundy and Mark Bristow in the team sprint where they broke the world record to win.

Kenny said: "This is my home track so this is where the pain happens, so it's nice to win some medals here too."

Anthony Kappes and Barney Storey took gold in the 200m tandem sprint and 1km time trial, setting new world records.

Other highlights included Aileen McGlynn and Ellen Hunter winning gold in the 1km tandem time trial.

Gary Rosbotham-Williams and Richard Waddon brought home a silver medal each.

# Weir's triple delight

London marathon winner David Weir overcame miserable weather conditions to win three gold medals.

Weir, who competes in the T54 category, won gold in the 100m, 200m and 1,500m.

"Winning three gold medals in three events is an unbelievable feeling," he said afterwards.

Javelin thrower Kenny Churchill also won gold and set a new world record.

"The home crowd gave me a huge lift and I got it just right in the tricky conditions," he said.

Beverley Jones won gold in the shot put, and Tracey Hinton grabbed one in the T11 400m.

Other British medal winners included David Gale (gold), Danny Crates (gold), Daniel Greaves (gold), Kim Minett (silver), Lloyd Upsdell (bronze) and Richard Schabel (bronze).

But there was disappointment for Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, who failed to win a medal in either of her events.

## SPORTS DIARY

**National Powerlifting Championships**
8–10 June
**Venue** Guttman Rd, Stoke Mandeville
**More information** Tel: 01296 395 995, www.wheelpower.org.uk

**Shooting National Championships**
9–10 June
**Venue** Guttman Rd, Stoke Mandeville
**More information** Tel: 01296 395 995, www.dtsgb.org.uk

**British Open Athletics Championships**
9–11 June
**Venue** City of Manchester Stadium
**More information** Tel: 0161 953 2499, www.disabilitysport.org.uk

## CELEB SCENE

### DANNY CRATES

To continue Britain's Paralympic legacy new athletes must rise through the ranks and take on the torch

Much has been written about the state of British disability sport in *DN* recently but, having just returned from the second Paralympic World Cup, the subject is worth revisiting.

The event was hailed as a success for the organisers and the BBC, whose coverage is second to none.

I continually hear complaints that there is not enough coverage: the public wants more. What a great position to be in.

It is thanks to continued support from TV, radio and print that Paralympic athletes can compete in front of the crowds that our non-disabled counterparts take for granted, but with this comes higher expectations.

The event itself could easily have been staged to publicise only a mass of British wins. What better way to get the public behind us in the run-up to Beijing and London 2012 than to portray the British Paralympic team as virtually unbeatable? But we did not do this.

The competition was a success because the best athletes from around the world were invited and, most importantly, accepted – even when it meant British athletes would be sacrificed on the track or on the field.

**'We do have some future champions, but not enough to take on the mighty Chinese team'**

Supporters got to see the level of performance it now takes to win a Paralympic event.

The Chinese team had a relatively small contingent in Manchester but looking ahead to 2008, one is left wondering whether we are heading for Chinese Paralympic domination.

Let's face it, they were a force to be reckoned with in Athens, so imagine what they can do on home ground.

This is a concern. Britain finished second on the medal table in Sydney and Athens, but we rely on a team of the old faithfuls and sadly, many will not be around to defend their titles for years to come.

This is partly due to the success of Paralympic sport. Many countries have worked hard on enticing athletes into the movement, so the standard is always increasing. There is always a new superstar waiting in the wings.

Britain has one of the best support structures in the world, from medical right the way through to financial. It allows athletes to train full-time.

Sadly, it is not the support we lack but the talent. We do have some future champions, but not enough to take on the mighty Chinese team, let alone the rest of the world.

Danny is a Paralympic champion and regularly appears on television

## YOUTH SPEAK

### IVY BROADHEAD

Sometimes a concert can turn into a covert operation

Tuesday saw me, along with about half of Tyne and Wear, queuing up to pay homage to The Streets at Newcastle's Carling Academy.

Last time I attended said venue, wary of spending two hours standing and at real risk of being squished, I got a seated ticket. But this plan was ruined by the militancy of the ushers, who rushed – riot shields at the ready – to control anyone who even considered dancing.

This time I joined the throngs of people on the dancefloor, armed with a sister possessing a werewolf-like ability to scare off anyone who comes within a metre of poor defenceless me. In the process she probably instills a lifelong fear of small people but hey, at least I'm not being stood on.

We turned up late, to find the venue already bursting at the seams. I resigned myself to not being able to see a thing all evening. But, in a stroke of genius, I figured I could stand on the top step of the staircase to the dancefloor, with full view of the stage. In theory. In practice, it involved gripping the bannister to avoid being swept away by the crowd. And I was still unable to see.

I rejoined the crowd, where I could at least dance. Suddenly, I spotted a stool on one of the balconies. A covert operation ensued, after which I did end up with a seat. Minor detail – I couldn't get on it.

Strong-armed family comes to the rescue and I am somewhat gracelessly instated upon my throne... a very slippery varnished wooden throne that I was at risk of sliding off. Oh, and I still couldn't see.

I won't hold all of this frustration against the lovely Mr Skinner, who put on a quality show – just as well considering I paid £20.

Ah well, that'll teach me to go out on a school night...

Ivy, 17, lives in Gateshead and is studying for her A–levels

## WORLD VIEW

### YANNIS VARDAKASTANIS

New European regulations will make air travel more accessible

In a few weeks, a new European regulation on the rights of disabled air passengers will be adopted. The regulation will be enforced in two years.

For the European Disability Forum (EDF), this is a major victory, after years of intensive campaigning.

The regulation will mean a significant change for the 50million disabled people in Europe.

I believe this is the first time European institutions have shown their commitment to building a nation in which disabled people no longer experience undignified treatment.

The EDF regularly receives cases of discrimination towards disabled air passengers. People are refused boarding or even booking, simply because they have an impairment.

A disabled passenger can be forced to pay for assistance or even to leave the airplane for unjustified safety reasons.

The new regulation will apply to all European airports and air carriers.

Airports will have to provide reliable assistance for disabled passengers from arrival to departure. Thanks to a centralised charging system, this assistance will be of the best quality and be monitored to prevent abuse and discrimination.

Unfortunately, a disabled passenger can be denied boarding in order "to meet safety requirements duly established by law". This can change from one country to another.

The future challenge of the EDF will be to encourage the European Union to harmonise rules in the area of safety requirements and clearly define these requirements.

We have come this far, so we will not give up until the right to travel with dignity is guaranteed for all disabled people in Europe.

Yannis is the president of the European Disability Forum

## TOP TALK

### NICK DANAGHER

The funding crisis affecting organisations of disabled people should prompt large scale reorganisation

The crisis situation of organisations of disabled people struggling to secure enough funding to survive made it on to *DN*'s front page last month. This is due to the government's failure to value the difference between organisations of and for disabled people.

The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit acknowledged the importance of organisations of disabled people in delivering equality.

Its *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* report said: "One of the key ingredients for developing this new approach should be the direct involvement of disabled people, primarily through local Centres for Independent Living. The capacity within these organisations should be increased to enable them to play an effective part in supporting disabled people to achieve independent living."

Centres for Independent Living (CILs) are grassroots organisations, run and controlled by disabled people. Their work is underpinned by principles like the social model of disability, self-determination and independent living philosophy.

Ideologically, their approach is far more logical than organisations for disabled people. Yet, it is these organisations which have taken valuable funding.

**'We have often criticised the system without offering solutions'**

In response to the British Council of Disabled People's recent loss of funding, the Department of Health said its grant scheme was "oversubscribed and on this occasion other candidates submitted applications that more effectively met our criteria" *(DN April, page 5)*. The question is whose criteria? Whose priorities? Whose agenda?

For CILs to reverse this marginalisation we must consider an infrastructure on the scale of Citizens Advice Bureaux or Race Equality Councils. To kick-start this process, the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) and the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) are relaunching a protocol which recognises that organisations of disabled people need reliable funding.

Local authorities should also recognise the importance of these organisations in promoting equality.

CILs have developed models of what works, leading to major policy initiatives like direct payments. But we have often criticised the system without offering solutions.

Funding must tackle disabled people's social exclusion; otherwise our life chances are likely to remain as limited as they have been so far.

Nick is executive director for the National Centre for Independent Living

# Do we need a new group like GLAD?

As Greater London Action on Disability folds, activist Ruth Bashall reflects on its demise and considers how disabled Londoners and visitors to the capital should be represented in the future

The disabled people's movement in the UK is at a turning point. In the last year, several organisations of disabled people lost their funding. Even though we have achieved so much, such as rights in law, the recognition of British Sign Language and direct payments, we are experiencing a backlash. The big charities want a piece of the action and the government uses our words to set its own agenda, which only values those who can make a contribution to society by being in paid work. In the middle of all this, London has lost its leading organisation of disabled people – Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD) is dead.

After 54 years GLAD has been destroyed (*DN, May, front page*) by the actions of a small group of disabled people who became increasingly unaccountable. There is a strong case for an investigation as to why things went on for so long without accountability to GLAD members.

GLAD was, until two years ago, a disabled people's organisation working for the rights of disabled Londoners. You could say I am biased – I was a consultant for GLAD for several years – but GLAD did make a difference. In past years, I remember the commitment of GLAD staff and volunteers, the excitement of the disabled women's conferences and other work on inclusion, such as supporting black and minority ethnic (BME) disabled people's organisations and providing a forum for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender disabled people. I remember with pride GLAD's impact on accessible transport and the members giving the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, such a hard time over Routemaster buses, which he got rid of eventually. I cheered when the 2004 London Plan said that all new housing had to be accessible, which we pushed for. I remember GLAD's 50th birthday party in 2002; we reflected on how much things had changed since the 1950s when, as the London Society for the Relief of Cripples, the organisation sent isolated disabled people a bag of coal and a canary (I kid you not). But there is still much to do to get our rights in the 21st century.

**'So GLAD is dead. Does London still need an organisation of deaf and disabled people?'**

**Ruth discussing transport issues with Peter Hendy, commissioner of Transport for London, at the Disability Capital conference 2006**

Every year I still look forward to celebrating disability culture at the mayor's Liberty Festival – GLAD's idea again. But I also remember that GLAD before the recent fiasco was a long way from being perfect and we all have lessons to learn.

So GLAD is dead. Does London still need an organisation of deaf and disabled people? I think it does. We need an organisation led by disabled people, grounded in our everyday experience of discrimination. It should be one that is able to tackle the big issues that matter such as human rights, transport, housing, independent living, education, the threat to our benefits, jobs and being able to live free from bullying and harassment in this great city of ours. Our organisation would need to represent the views of disabled people to the mayor, the government and services such as the police. It would need to support and empower hard-pressed local organisations of disabled people, from borough disability associations to BME groups – all those smaller groups which are the lifeblood of the movement. It would need to bring together conflicting interest groups. It could help shape new leaders and teachers for our movement. Having said all that, we should be realistic about what one organisation can do. It is now up to deaf and disabled Londoners to talk, argue and decide what we want.

The Greater London Authority, which already facilitates a forum for deaf and disabled people's organisations, has offered to host an open meeting in July. That should get things moving.

My suggestion is that we also set up a steering group of people prepared to consult with deaf and disabled people in London about what sort of organisation we want.

The Association of London Government, which previously funded GLAD, should be asked to ringfence money to support the steering group. It must be representative and diverse, including people from grassroots organisations, not just the usual suspects. But above all, it needs deaf and disabled people who are committed to working together.

Make no mistake, this will be hard work. The steering group will have to rebuild trust, be open to new ways of doing things and be accountable and accessible to deaf and disabled people's organisations across London.

A strong and united movement is needed now more than ever. If you want to be part of what happens next in London, watch this space.

## KEY NOTES

### ANDY RICKELL

It's time to channel the anger against disablism

Last month, I met with my good friend Rachel Hurst. For most people meeting a friend, it takes a two-minute chat to organise. I am sure many of them think that disabled people can meet one another with the same ease.

However, it took several hours of research to find an accessible venue in Cheltenham, where we were meeting. Despite several site visits, I still feared I had not accurately judged the accessibility of the chosen meeting place.

Politicians and the public may genuinely believe that disabled people's life chances are much better than they used to be. So, they must think that someone like me, who is always expressing dissatisfaction about disabled people's real experiences and encouraging other disabled people to do so, is just a troublemaker. On many issues I am very tolerant, but on the issues of disabled people's rights I feel unable to remain silent because it offends fundamental justice. I think many other people feel the same about disabled people's rights, whether they are disabled people or not.

We need to galvanise this anger, this natural passion for rights that many disabled and non-disabled people have, into effective political action to make irreversible progress towards disabled people's equality. If, as the Scope campaign says, it is Time to Get Equal, it also needs to be Time to Channel Anger – anger at disabled people's exclusion from transport, education, employment, justice and independent living generally.

This activity should be led by disabled people and based on people's real experiences of injustice. We need to learn what are the really big issues that make lots of us angry. We should tell one another, in no uncertain terms: "As a disabled person, what really pisses me off is…". We need a vehicle to bring all these experiences together so we can take action together – could that be a *Disability Now* with a new mission?

**Andy is executive director for diversity, politics and planning at Scope**

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# Letters to the Editor

Send your letters to the acting editor Sarah Hobson, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, minicom: 020 7619 7332, fax: 020 7619 7331, email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

## Rights act makes a huge difference

After reading your news focus on the use of the Human Rights Act *(DN, May, Page 18)* I thought readers should hear my story.

In 2000, my occupational therapy department decided I needed a profile bed with carer-lifting so my carers could give me bed-baths.

My physio also thought this was a good idea as I am unable to leave my bed and have had back pain from being propped up with pillows and slipping.

As I was sleeping in a double bed with my husband, I asked for a double bed. This was refused as the authority would only pay for a single bed. We offered to pay for the other half of the bed, but this was refused and stalemate ensued for 18 months, with letters passing back and forth.

I took advice from the Disability Law Centre, which advised mentioning Article 8 of the act – the right to private and family life. My advisor also told me to mention we had offered to pay for the bed, so the authority would have no legal defence.

I sent these comments and said I would wait three weeks for a reply. If unfavourable, I would take them to court.

Within three hours the authority had discovered enough money to buy the whole of my double profile bed, which was installed in December 2001.

It has made a phenomenal difference to my life.

If something similar happened in future, I would have no hesitation in using the act again.

**Sue Firth, Halifax**

## Scottish bill 'a threat'

I take issue with the title of your item on the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Bill – "Safer in Scotland" *(DN, May, page 10)*.

Many within the Scottish disabled people's independent living movement, including myself, consider this bill a direct threat to our safety, human rights and efforts to achieve independent living.

This bill is disablist and may foster existing institutional disablism within Scottish community care.

Implementation of its measures, along with those in the Vetting and Barring Bill, may divert scarce resources from frontline community care services and lead to unnecessary institutionalisation against disabled people's wishes.

Abuse should not be tolerated, particularly of those not able to, or not wishing to, defend themselves.

To restrict people affected by the bill to those who are "affected by disability, mental disorder, illness, infirmity or ageing" promotes the medical model and treats older and disabled people differently from others, such as refugees and people who have been sexually abused and who may be equally unable or unwilling to protect themselves.

But, such discrimination might be favourable if this bill promoted positive support to prevent abuse.

However, there is little in it to provide – on a mandatory basis – effective support such as peer advocacy, independent living resources and other empowerment measures.

The bill states the least restrictive option to an adult's freedom should be taken, but its emphasis is on the cheaper option of protection and the withdrawal of older or disabled people from abusers, which could result in residential care.

Support should always take precedence over protection and resources should concentrate on empowerment of abused adults.

Research on abuse has shown: Disability and aging do not create the potential for abuse. They are often a minor factor among others, such as social, economic, cultural and political circumstances;

More can be learnt about abuse by looking at abusers than focusing on victims;

Abused people want abuse to stop, but they may value other things such as keeping a relationship and getting help for an abuser;

In trying to protect people, it is easy to ignore rights and choices and people may be left in a worse position;

Abuse and neglect issues are complex, so simple solutions tend to fail. Addressing problems requires the skills of different types of people and both assessment and finding solutions must include the abused people.

The Scottish Executive, parliament and media must listen to the people they stigmatise as old, disabled and vulnerable, before bringing in such disablist and ageist legislation, otherwise we may all end up in the European Court of Human Rights.

**James Elder Woodward, West Dunbartonshire**

## Concern over commissioner's temporary disability

The May edition of *DN* included an advert for the chair and commissioners for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights *(see www.cehrappointments.co.uk)*.

I am disturbed by three little words innocently nestling in the job details. The disability commissioner will be somebody who is "or has been" a disabled person.

Has been? Permanence is a criterion in all the definitions of disability I have read.

Are we going to be represented by someone who once broke an ankle? We should know. What do other readers think?

**Helena Edwards, by email**


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## Transport should be free

Roger Budden seems to miss the point when he says disabled people should pay for parking because that is "equality" *(DN, May, page 22)*.

The reason disabled people tend to have to drive is because the public transport system is not accessible to them.

Non-disabled people have the option of a whole range of different, often cheaper, ways of getting to a destination, but disabled people often don't have such choices.

That does not sound like equality to me, so why should we have to pay for it?

**Emma Bowler, by email**

# web watch

All the latest from the Disability Now forums and Have your say pages, found at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

## Wheelchair mangled during flight

**We have just got back from a holiday in the US. Between Chicago and Manchester airport our daughter's wheelchair was completely wrecked and is now unusable – we think they've dropped it somewhere. I've started to liaise with the airline's insurers who are suggesting that we claim off our holiday insurance, which doesn't cover us. Does anyone know what our rights are? We are lost without the powered chair and it is already taking too much time.**
**Phil G**

I always make sure my walking frame is covered by my own travel insurance; it is less hassle and repairs should be quicker. I think the powers that be delay on purpose hoping you will forget or give up.
**Penny Pooch**

Take them to the courts and sue for the cost of replacement and compensation for the trouble you have had going without your wheelchair. You should go to a solicitor and ask them for advice.
**Dogposhpaws**

## Tesco ignores bay abuse

**I have had a lot of problems with Tesco. It has two branches nearby which do provide accessible parking spaces, but the problem is that all the spaces are usually taken up by non-disabled drivers. When I complained, I was told there was nothing they could do for me – they did not want to upset these drivers by asking them to move their cars as they might complain.**
**Allan**

My mum and I were talking about this very subject this morning and I had an idea. You know how we have RADAR keys for toilets? Well how about getting a swipe card for your blue badge, which opens toilets and a modified parking space? The parking bays could have an electronic barrier and a swipe box to give you access to the parking bay. For people who can't stick their arm out of the car window, they could have a remote control with a serial number particular to that disabled person.
**Gaina**

As a disabled blue badge holder, not a driver, I hobbled in agony (in the rain) to Boots because all the bays were taken. I checked the windscreens of cars and three had badges, four didn't. I said loudly, "I can't believe the selfishness of some people. Some people must enjoy watching blue badge holders suffer". Several people looked towards the parked cars and gave that disapproving eye roll, head shake and tut. One chap gave me a filthy look, which I returned. I saw him sprint to the disabled parking bay and jump in a car without a badge. It's about time the government looked after its disabled people properly and made it illegal to steal a bay if you're not a badge holder.
**Crystal Cavies**

Wardens in Scotland fine people £50 on the spot for dropping cigarette butts. Has anyone ever seen someone fined for parking in a disabled parking bay? My blood is boiling at the lack of equality.
**Liz Williams**

Tesco's logo makes me sick. They say "every little helps" but they do nothing at all to help anyone. At the rate they are gaining new stores, there will be more supermarkets than there are customers. The only way to stop those selfish people is to have the government pass a bill making it illegal for a non-disabled driver to use our spaces. If there was a prospect of a £100 fine they might think twice.
**Furry**

**Have your say and join others chatting at www.disabilitynow.org.uk**

## backchat

- Apparently, the Department for Transport (DfT) has discovered a way to communicate with deceased holders of blue badges.

*DN* had quizzed the DfT about its failure to convince the Home Office to add the return of a blue badge onto the list of things to do when registering a death.

Unfortunately, the DfT believes the best way to ensure badges are returned after a death is by "clearer advice to badge holders".

Quite how this will help when they are, um, dead, the DfT was unable to explain.

- Despite sparse attendance at the Commons disability debate, which the government 'accidentally' held on an election day again, *Backchat* was pleased to note several mentions of *DN*.

Interestingly, after Lib Dem Danny Alexander mentioned our survey of centres for independent living (CIL), Tory Jeremy Hunt asked him seconds later if he was aware of a CIL survey that appeared in…*DN*. Glad Jez was paying attention.

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# A step nearer independence day

## Lord Ashley's new independent living bill is poised to reignite disabled people's fight for basic human rights. Elizabeth Choppin investigates

Some might say the idea of true independent living – where disabled people have the choice, control and freedom to live the lives they wish to lead – is the holy grail of the disability rights movement.

But with Lord Ashley's *(pictured)* new independent living (IL) bill due to be published in the next few weeks, he and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) - which helped write it - are poised to take a step towards making IL a reality for disabled people.

The bill will address issues such as ensuring disabled people have access to communication support and can choose where they want to live. It will also say that local authorities have a duty to provide services that give disabled people more choice and autonomy in their lives.

Lord Ashley says the bill will provide an entirely new system so that all disabled people can live independently.

He says the bill is aimed at "patching up the system here and there" and is confident that it will eventually reach the statute books.

Disability organisations, campaigners and central government have all agreed that IL is key to securing disabled people's rights. Most notably, the government's *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* report* last year cited IL as the "centrepiece of the strategy" to building equality.

But some campaigners have demanded to know whether government policy is actually being implemented, following reports of funding problems affecting user-led organisations *(DN, May, page 1)* which have been fundamental in IL developments like direct payments.

A DRC spokesman says the *Life Chances* report was a "decisive step" in furthering the IL agenda, but adds: "It is disappointing though that, since the report, we're still waiting, twiddling our thumbs, for the task force to implement [the policy]."

He says: "This bill is going to put the power back into disabled people's hands. It aims to ensure a level playing field and a higher threshold of support that local authorities should provide to disabled people."

Although the IL bill is not expected to become law yet, it is an important "building block", says Ian Loynes, director of Southampton Centre for Independent Living.

He says that, until the bill is published, it is difficult to say how it would "fill in the gaps", but he is glad it is expected to address concerns about eligibility criteria and how the quality of services for disabled people often depends on local authority social services budgets.

He adds: "It will raise the issue that disabled people should be able to live how they want to and not under the guard of local authority finances. We're looking to see [that] disabled people can have rights irrespective of cost."

**'This bill is going to put the power back into disabled people's hands'**

Sian Vasey, director of Ealing Centre of Independent Living, believes a crucial point is that the DRC says the bill will ensure people receive enough money to recruit and retain quality care workers.

"This really does come down to cash," she says. "I have found that to say 'this person needs more money' does not go down very well [with the local council]."

Ms Vasey also stresses the importance of services run by disabled people.

She says: "It's a very useful thing to present to people that it can be done – that someone before you has gone and organised a posse of carers. It gives you more accurate information."

The IL bill will also address issues such as involuntary institutionalisation and the right to communication equipment.

Jenny Herd, co-founder of Speak Out Loud and mother of a communication aid user, says the bill is "long overdue".

She says: "What it's doing is enshrining a right for people who can't speak and don't speak very clearly to have a voice. If someone does not have a communication aid appropriate to their age and to their intellectual level, then they are being denied a fundamental right."

Simone Aspis, parliamentary advisor for the British Council of Disabled People, welcomes the principles behind the bill because it would "mean for the first time ever that disabled people would have a right to independent living with appropriate support".

She says: "For too long, disabled people have been forced into residential homes, been prisoners in their own homes…simply because local authorities have no legal duty imposed upon them to provide equipment, adaptations, personal assistance and accessible housing."

Although the bill is broad-sweeping, it is hoped it will reinvigorate the fight for equality, present workable reforms and raise the profile of the IL agenda in parliament and the media.

* *www.strategy.gov.uk/work_areas/disability*

### Why the bill is needed

**Cash flow crisis:** Pamela Franklin *(right)*, from west London, has motor neurone disease and needs 24-hour care. Direct payments made it possible to hire her own support workers and the first person she employed herself was perfect.

"After a few weeks we went to Tate Modern and, as we sat overlooking the Thames, I cried with happiness. I was finally independent," she says.

In April 2005 she asked for more money to pay a realistic rate to attract good workers.

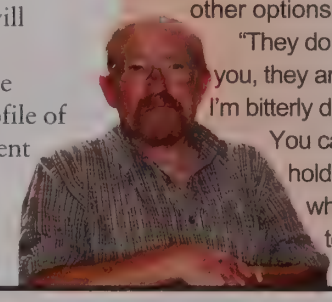
"Since then I have been assessed, reassessed, asked to provide never-ending medical proof of my deterioration, and I still haven't had a decision. It has been a whole year now and it simply shouldn't be this hard to get a decent amount of direct payment for a person with high needs such as me."

**New-found confidence:** Communication aid user Anthony Robertson works at Chatting Independently, a residential/rehabilitation centre. He first started using an electronic voice output communication aid (VOCA) at the age of 17. At work, VOCA has enabled him to have an active role in employing staff, teaching residents and taking part in meetings.

"Using a VOCA has complemented my motivation to get on in life and given me confidence to gain employment and raise awareness about disability and the need for communication aids," he says.

**Council complaints:** Robert Stead *(below)* has been disabled for three years and now lives in a care home after his wife could no longer act as his carer. He was forced to move out of his house because three steps made it inaccessible. He says he could live at home but the council has not discussed other options with him.

"They don't phone you, they are never in. I'm bitterly disappointed. You can't get hold of them when you want to," he says.



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# Mobilise's marriage of convenience

Disabled motorists' organisation Mobilise has had a slow start, but chairman Douglas Campbell promises to put representation back on track

After a long on-off courtship, what does the future hold for Mobilise and its members? It has hardly been a whirlwind romance.

The Disabled Drivers' Association (DDA) and the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club (DDMC) first talked about merging 50 years ago. There were several attempts to bring about a marriage, but there were always obstacles and disagreements.

In July 2004, the DDMC chairman wrote to the DDA chairman suggesting they should talk. The two charities started meetings and moved forward smoothly until a hiccup over finance in October 2005 – literally as the bride was about to walk up the aisle.

However, like the best romances, they reunited and the wedding took place quietly in December.

Still, the honeymoon period was all too short after the first chief executive Pamela Morrissey left within months, at the beginning of April, to pursue other interests. It was unfortunate this happened, but it will not have any major impact on the merger.

**'The new organisation has just one role, to improve the mobility of disabled people'**

No decision has been made on a replacement; it would be good to recruit a disabled person, but the ability to do the job well is the key requirement.

Despite this setback, elections were held in April 2006 to appoint the new board of trustees. These are experienced people from DDA and DDMC, and they are focused on making Mobilise stronger. Only disabled people can sit on the board to ensure those directly affected by our work have control of the charity.

The different structures of volunteers in the DDA and DDMC present an interesting challenge. When area representatives from DDMC merge with local group committees from DDA it will give enormous strength to mobility issues that arise locally.

Staff of the former organisations are still located in the Northamptonshire and Norfolk offices. No decision has been made on whether both offices should be retained. In the meantime, both offer a full range of services.

The magazines *Disabled Motorist* and *Magic Carpet* were published for the last time in 2005. The new magazine is *No Limit* and every member receives a free copy each month.

The new organisation has just one role – to improve the mobility of disabled people. Both DDA and DDMC were acknowledged leaders in this field and their combined effort will ensure even better results.

The emphasis will be on mobility by car, van, scooter and wheelchair. These are important issues which we believe no other organisation specialises in. Key campaign areas will include:

- **The baywatch campaign** – The aim of this long-running campaign has been to improve provision of parking bays for disabled people, starting with the major supermarkets. Work on the merger and a lack of enthusiasm from supermarkets has resulted in a lack of action. This campaign must gain momentum to achieve long-term results.
- **Parking** –Too often disabled people cannot park at their destination because a non-disabled person is using the disabled parking bay. This is not acceptable and Mobilise will be actively pursuing this issue.
- **Parking in London** – Disabled people cannot park in central London because the blue badge scheme is not properly recognised there. Mobilise will be campaigning to change this.
- **Blue badge** – The review of the blue badge scheme was completed in 2002. Many recommendations were accepted by the Department for Transport but they have not been implemented yet. Mobilise will be chasing ministers for action.
- **Road pricing** – Widespread road pricing is ten years away, but we must start campaigning now to ensure it does not have a negative impact on disabled people.

The key to our future is our members. Only with your support, can Mobilise maintain a meaningful relationship with and for the benefit of disabled drivers.

** Membership costs £14. For more information or to join Mobilise, tel: 01508 489 449, hq@dda.org.uk*

- Is Mobilise helping you as a disabled driver? Contact *DN* with your feedback now and in the future at *editor@disabilitynow.org.uk* or write to the usual address.

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# Back to the bare basics

It's been a busy 12 months for *DN*'s motoring correspondent. Helen Smith reflects on the issues which mean the most to you now and in the future

Welcome to this year's motoring supplement *Get in Gear*, which is published to coincide with the Mobility Roadshow – a major annual event for disabled motorists and their families – between 8 and 10 June.

It is hard to believe a whole year has passed since I last made my way up to Donington Park to the roadshow, to check out the latest products, meet contacts and see *Get in Gear* flying off the *DN* stand*.

The big change this year is that I won't be going north from Norwich, but instead I will head west to Kemble Airfield near Swindon.

This is Kemble's first time for the event - Donington Park is being upgraded - and it will be interesting to see if this venue is as popular with visitors and exhibitors.

As usual, visitors will be able to view and test products, including adapted vehicles and mobility aids.

Test-drive opportunities will range from compact cars and all terrain 4x4s to scooters and quad bikes.

As part of celebrations of the National Young Disabled Person's Day, there will also be equipment aimed at children as well as driving lessons, entertainment and a crèche.

But most exciting of all, you'll be able to see myself and the *DN* team star in a mini programme about our work. As part of a wider programme and information service, you'll learn more about our campaigning work, including the fight against misuse of accessible parking bays. The programme will be screened on satelliteTV at a later date.

Visitors will also be able to pick up free copies of *DN* and *Get in Gear*, which this year gets back to basics, focusing on issues which are fundamental to disabled people's ability to get around independently.

I have chosen to investigate proposals to ease road congestion, which I hope we can influence so disabled drivers can benefit.

Our roads are busier than ever, which is extremely frustrating for those of us who find driving is essential.

So, concern that certain disabled drivers may not be able to use planned car pool lanes must be addressed.

The difficulty of filling up your car is a continuing problem, as demonstrated by Nick Kimber in a tour of garages around his home.

The problem is getting worse since the introduction of the chip and PIN payment system, but Nick did not experience this since he was unable even to get petrol in most places.

Not only do disabled people have the problem of getting a cashier's attention to help fill the car, but now paying is causing mayhem.

Why, when the system was introduced, was the fact that PIN machines do not reach station forecourts ignored?

To get around this problem, I tried to take out a dual signature and chip and PIN card with Halifax bank, but like with all other banks I tried, this cannot be done. You either have a sign only card or take out another card with a different bank.

**'*Get in Gear* is focusing on issues which are fundamental to disabled people's ability to get around independently'**

*DN* also addresses one of the main motoring problems that persists, which is delays on updating the blue badge scheme.

Let's hope the government moves soon to address misuse of badges and ensure the scheme is recognised by councils across the country.

On a more positive note, I have begun to notice that learning to drive for disabled people is getting easier as more motoring schools are offering cars with hand controls.

*Get in Gear* also features Gareth Almond, a disabled driver who set up his own driving school in order to get other disabled people on the road.

In the past 12 months I have taken advanced driving lessons and qualified as an advanced driver. This was a great experience and I encourage readers to do the same – it might even reduce your car insurance costs.

It is clear the ever-increasing costs of fuel are a problem for everybody.

Prices rose to one pound a litre a few months ago and many disabled people said they were worried about meeting the additional expense.

Although the average petrol price per litre is now back to about 94p, the cost of running a car is considerably more than it used to be, and the mobility part of the Disability Living Allowance has not risen to meet this extra cost.

I intend to explore these issues over the coming year.

Another hot topic over the next 12 months will be the progress of the Mobilise Organisation, which you have already read about on this supplement's front page.

We have heard about delays and resignations, but what is important is supporting disabled motorists, so let's hope for a quick and successful return to campaigning.

If there is a motoring issue you would like *DN* to investigate, a question you want answered, a new car to review or a piece of equipment to test, let us know and we'll do our best to keep you cruising.

** Come and meet the DN team at the Mobility Roadshow at stand A2. I will be around on the Thursday.*

Gadgets galore: Helen Smith at last year's Mobility Roadshow

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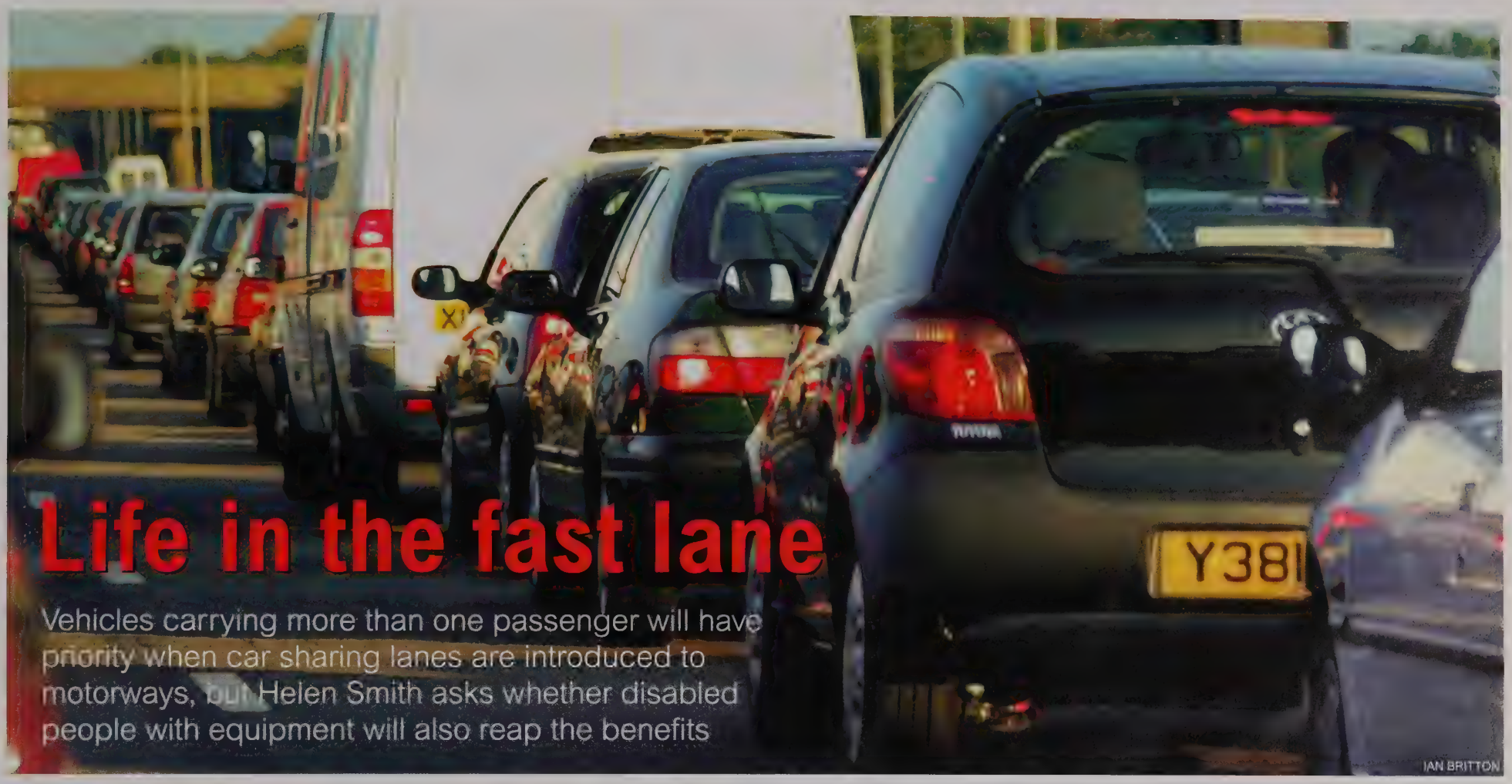


# Life in the fast lane

Vehicles carrying more than one passenger will have priority when car sharing lanes are introduced to motorways, but Helen Smith asks whether disabled people with equipment will also reap the benefits

IAN BRITTON

Anyone who travels on British motorways will know how busy they can get. Even short journeys can take hours, especially during the morning and evening rush hours.

Much of this is due to people travelling in their vehicles alone. So, in a bid to reduce congestion, the Highways Agency* is encouraging drivers to car pool and arrange to share their vehicles with more than one person.

High occupancy vehicle, or car pool, lanes are to be introduced to the M606 and M62, between Bradford and Leeds, and Junctions 7 to 10 of the M1. To use these lanes more than one person must be in the vehicle.

**'It has not been decided how its rules will be enforced or at what times it will operate'**

Car pool lanes are common in Europe and the United States (US) but in England there are currently only three short stretches on local authority roads.

These lanes allow vehicles to bypass congestion, gain priority access to other roads and help the environment. For example, the lane on the M62 will be one mile long and allow vehicles with more than one person to bypass congestion and gain priority entry onto eastbound lanes.

By using this lane it has been predicted that people will save eight minutes on average during rush hour.

Although car sharing lanes sound good in theory, some people have reservations. Edmund King from the RAC says that car pool lanes could work but only if people can find someone making a similar journey. He expressed reservations at the likelihood of this happening.

A study by the University of California, Berkeley, found that car pool lanes in San Francisco were underused, resulting in longer than average journey times as more vehicles were forced into the other lanes.

The study also found that vehicles travelled slower because they could not overtake.

Many US highway authorities are now trying to make better use of the lanes by allowing solo drivers to use them if they pay a toll.

They also allow solo drivers in hybrid vehicles (a combination of gas and electric) to use the lanes if they get a permit from the state.

Alistair Darling, transport secretary until last month's reshuffle, said: "Car pool lanes have an important role to play in making best use of road space, as well as helping the environment and reducing congestion. They work in the US and there is no reason they can't work here."

The M606/M62 lane should be up and running as a pilot scheme in 2007. It has not been decided how its rules will be enforced or at what times it will operate.

It is undecided whether motorcyclists or low carbon cars can use them, or whether disabled people will be able to travel alone on the lanes.

I asked the Highways Agency if disabled people will be able to use the new car pool lanes if they are travelling alone.

I pointed out that some wheelchair users carry their wheelchair on the seat next to them, leaving little room for a passenger. I was told no decision had been made and I should put this point to the Department for Transport (DfT).

A DfT spokesman says: "We will be consulting over the course of this financial year and hope to make a decision early next year on whether disabled badge holders would be eligible to travel in high occupancy vehicle lanes."

South Gloucestershire Council, which already has a car pool lane in operation, does not allow exemptions for disabled people.

Car pool lanes work in the US because there is a dense residential area separated from a business district by a freeway. In the UK travel patterns are very different and I believe setting up car pool clubs will be much harder.

Some motoring groups fear that the only people using the lanes will be doing so by chance, so it will not reduce congestion at all. They hope that if congestion does not improve the lanes will be opened for general use again.

With so many unanswered questions, it is difficult to predict whether car pool lanes will work, but we will never know until we try.

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# Blue badge shakeup frustratingly slow

Planned improvements to the blue badge scheme have progressed at a sluggish pace, but some local authorities are cracking down on misuse and fraud anyway. John Pring reports

Improving the blue badge scheme has been a long, slow process.

There are many problems to address: the use of fake badges; the theft of genuine badges from cars which are sold on the black market; non-disabled people using blue badge parking spaces; and local authorities without proper databases of badge holders.

To address these and many other problems across the UK, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) began a review of the scheme in 1999.

Three years later, after a lengthy consultation, DPTAC produced 47 recommendations. These included: introducing a national database of blue badge holders; a possible extension of eligibility to people with impairments such as severe autism or mental health problems; and scrapping the exemptions of four central London boroughs, where the scheme does not apply.

DPTAC also recommended that police officers, traffic wardens and parking attendants should be given the power to inspect blue badges, to boost the fight against fraud.

The Department for Transport (DfT) accepted many of DPTAC's recommendations, but pointed out the need for further research and consultations, including discussions with the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Now, seven years on from the start of DPTAC's review, there has been some progress towards implementing its recommendations but at a frustratingly slow pace.

Last spring, the DfT announced the three companies which would carry out research into a national database, the central London exemptions and extending the scheme to other groups of disabled people.

Following delays to all three, two were due for completion as *DN* went to press. The third, looking at the London exemptions, is due in November.

The DfT said last year that it was "finalising" draft regulations for other changes to the scheme, such as: introducing temporary badges for those with temporary mobility impairments; extending the scheme to children under two who require bulky medical equipment to be carried with them; and reintroducing a hologram onto badges to help prevent fraud.

The DfT was planning to consult on the changes, and introduce them at the end of 2005. The DfT now says these consultations will take place "later this year".

Progress on one vital DPTAC recommendation has been particularly slow. Two years ago, the government's Traffic Management Act became law. The act included new powers for police officers, parking attendants and traffic wardens to inspect blue badges.

Transport minister Tony McNulty said at the time that abuse of the scheme "undermines its credibility and has an immediate impact on the mobility of disabled people".

He added: "Those misusing the badge will be more likely to think twice as they could be fined up to £1,000 on conviction."

Last year, the DfT said the new powers and associated guidance for local authorities should come into force by summer 2005. The DfT now expects them to be in place "later this year".

As with other issues arising from the blue badge review, the devolved governments in Scotland and Wales will introduce the same powers, but through their own legislation.

Mary Grace, chairman of The Blue Badge Network, the charity for disabled people with blue badges, says these delays are "very, very frustrating".

Police crackdown: Sgt Dave Lightfoot, of Merseyside Police, with a fake blue badge

**'They certainly seem to be dragging their heels in many things'**

Mrs Grace says a national database would add credibility to the scheme and force local authorities to take it seriously.

"Some do really take it seriously and others don't. They are all singing from different hymn sheets."

She says DfT progress has been "slow but steady", but adds, "there are a lot of things that need to be done. They certainly seem to be dragging their heels in many things".

Neil Betteridge, chair of DPTAC, says things are "moving in the right direction" and that the government is "tackling some of the major issues".

He believes the delays are not through a "lack of commitment". "A lot of these issues are actually quite complex. You would rather make sure you got it right."

But there are many DPTAC recommendations the government has made little progress on. These include stricter penalties for fraud and misuse of blue badges, such as penalty points on driving licences, something Mr Betteridge says would "send a very clear message that abuse of the scheme is not just illegal but socially unacceptable".

But the Home Office has told the DfT it would not be appropriate to introduce penalty points, although discussions are continuing about how to counter abuse.

Despite the delays, some local authorities are trying to improve the way the scheme operates.

Liverpool and Birmingham, and London boroughs such as Islington, Tower Hamlets and Lambeth, are among those areas tackling misuse and fraud.

Another is Hackney, which has worked with police to clamp down on the theft of badges from cars, which accounts for nearly 60 per cent of motor vehicle crime in the borough. Badges are sold for up to £100, according to Detective Constable Robin Oakley, of Stoke Newington motor vehicle crime squad.

During February and March, plain-clothed officers visited crime hot spots and interviewed more than 200 people who were using blue badges, checking with Hackney council that their badges were valid. The operation led to 25 arrests for blue badge fraud, with at least 20 people charged.

DC Oakley says the new inspection powers will help police, and will be "extremely effective" in helping traffic wardens, who currently lack any power to inspect badges.

Helen Thacker, head of the team responsible for improving the blue badge scheme for Norfolk County Council, says the powers of inspection have already helped, even though they have not been introduced yet.

"I think it has focused people's minds on the fact that it is a real problem," she says.

Mary Grace says improving the blue badge scheme is vital.

"It gives you the opportunity to be independent and gives you more self-esteem and a feeling that you are in control of your life and not imprisoned in your own home."

Maybe someone should remind the DfT.

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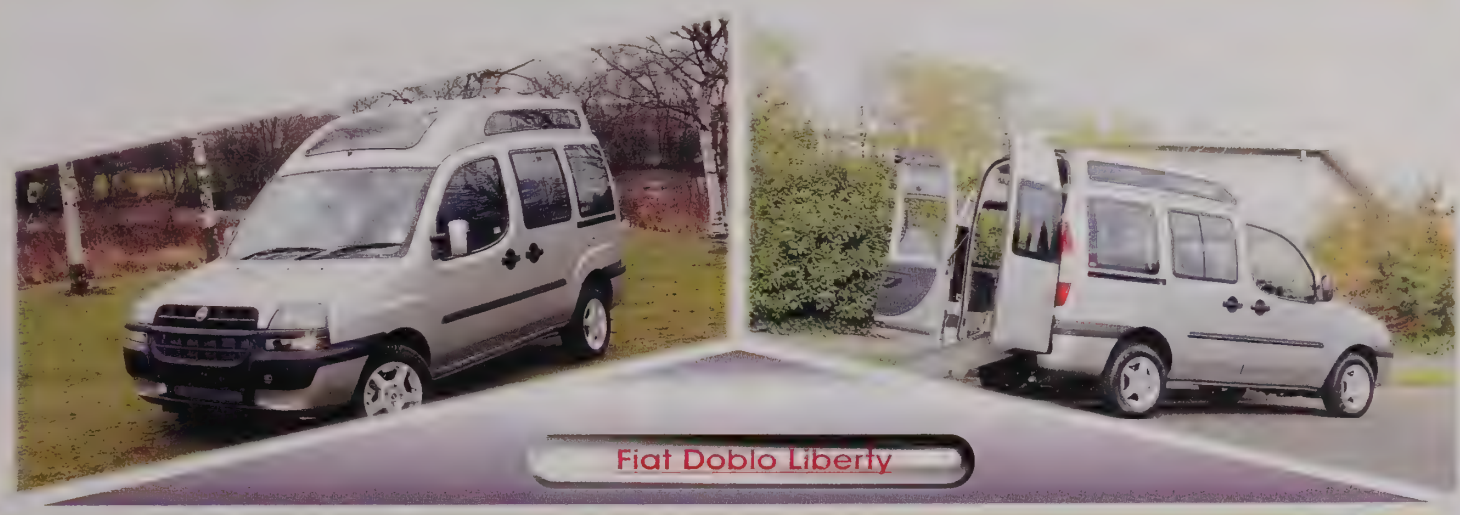

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# End of the road for inaccessible hire cars?

Car hire companies will be required to step up their services for disabled people from December, but will they be ready and how can varying needs be met? Priya Kotecha investigates

Bob Ross has been driving his adapted car since 1992, but every time his Ford Fiesta goes in for a service or needs repair he has to rely on expensive taxis.

Mr Ross says the option of hiring a car for the day is not readily available.

"Hiring an adapted car is not as easy as it should be. I've got an adapted vehicle myself and when it's not on the road I find it very difficult to hire something on a temporary basis," he says.

Mr Ross points out that disabled people who use cars as their primary means of getting around can feel cut off when alternative options are not available.

He says: "If you are an able-bodied person you can get on the bus or tube. For lots of disabled people like me, we don't have that option. It's like taking your legs away."

As transport providers come under part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 from December, it is hoped it will be easier for disabled people to hire vehicles when and where they want to.

**'Hiring an adapted car is not as easy as it should be'**

The government's decision to lift exemption for transport providers might have the most significant impact for car hire companies. They will be expected to ensure physical access to premises as well as improve services.

Under the DDA, car hire companies will be expected to offer vehicles with hand controls, enable a driver to stow their wheelchair and provide cars with access for passengers seated in their wheelchairs. The companies will also be required to provide disability equality training to frontline staff.

Among the estimated 500 rental companies in the UK, major providers such as Avis, Thrifty, National Car Rental and Hertz all offer adapted vehicles with basic hand controls.

But disabled driving experts point out it will be a challenge to ensure there is provision for all disabled people, as needs vary from driver to driver.

Many use hand controls, such as a single-level push/pull mechanism on an automatic vehicle, which should be provided under the DDA. But other more complex needs will not be covered, including the provision of drive-from vehicles and infrared controls on the steering wheel, which allow drivers to operate wipers, a stereo and signals at the touch of a button.

Douglas Campbell, chairman and acting chief executive of Mobilise, says: "It will be difficult to say to car hire companies they must do this and they must do that, because we have to be realistic about this. Even if you lined up four disabled drivers, all requiring basic hand controls, each one will be different depending on the person driving the car."

But, he adds, the DDA should help car hire businesses realise the potential market of disabled drivers and once a sufficient number of rental companies offer adequate provision the rest will be forced to follow.

Many disabled drivers feel the biggest potential improvement should be the way services are delivered.

Craig Grimes has often been "stranded" at airports because of poor service provision. He says: "On more than one occasion, I've arrived in the UK, gone to the car hire desk and they know nothing about it or the car hasn't yet been fitted with the hand controls."


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Another concern is the cost of adapted vehicles.

Since David Player moved back to the UK three years ago, he has tried a range of car hire companies for affordable vehicles with hand controls.

He says: "Avis and other major car rental companies say they provide this service but the extra charges have always been very high, on top of the rental rate for an automatic car, which is always much higher than their manual equivalents."

When *DN* contacted the major car hire companies, Avis and Hertz responded, giving quotes based on a standard 1.6 Ford Focus.

Hertz charges £67 per day for a manual vehicle and £95 for an automatic. There is no extra charge for a hand control.

A spokeswoman for Hertz says: "All our locations are easily accessible for those with mobility problems and wheelchair users."

Avis offers the manual car for £71 a day, but for an automatic car the price goes up to £121. A hand control is charged at an additional £70 and there is a further £10 charge for this service, which Avis is unable to explain.

When requesting a car with a standard hand control, *DN* is told by one assistant that the company needs four to five days advance notice, but this is reduced to two days when a local branch is found to have the car.

A spokeswoman for the Disability Rights Commission says: "Avis could be acting unlawfully if they are charging this £70 more for standard adaptations".

A spokeswoman for Avis says: "Avis currently make all reasonable efforts as required by law, to ensure we meet the needs of customers with disabilities.

"Avis are able to supply hand controls to be fitted to automatic vehicles with 48 hours' notice. The direct cost of supplying the hand controls (which Avis hire from a specialist supplier) is passed to the customer, plus daily hire charge.

"Whilst Avis currently do not have a fleet of adapted vehicles the service we provide to our customers with disabilities is under constant review, and we will be looking for further ways to enhance it in line with the revised legislation. We are unable to comment at this stage on what those enhancements may be."

As the DDA deadline for implementation draws near, campaigners hope to see small problems ironed out in the coming months.

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# Give London a chance

Many *DN* readers say they avoid travelling to London because parking is difficult and expensive, while public transport is inaccessible and equally costly. Douglas Campbell says the barriers can be overcome and urges you to visit

As a child I loved to visit central London. We lived in Canterbury from 1955 to 1961 and my father would have to visit London every two weeks for work. In school holidays we would travel with him on the train or by car.

There was no accessible public transport in those days. If we used the train we shared the goods truck with sacks of shellfish and baskets of racing pigeons. Roads were not congested and parking was available to everyone who knew where to go.

## Driving dos and don'ts

For many disabled people today, London has become a no-go zone. Outside London we have our blue badge concessions, but these are not available in central London.

In the City of London, the City of Westminster, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and part of the Borough of Camden none of the blue badge rules apply.

There are few concessions in these areas. Badge holders may park in designated blue badge and orange badge bays, but most of these bays have a time limit of three or four hours, which is little use if you want to spend the day sightseeing.

Badge holders may park for up to one hour extra in pay and display areas.

Some designated bays are only for holders of badges issued by that particular authority, so always check the signs.

There are some tricks to parking. Try the designated disabled bays in Regent's Park and Hyde Park, which are near some popular destinations.

You can also park on the south side of the Thames, where normal blue badge concessions apply.

Park near a Docklands Light Railway station and use this service to quickly get to Bank or Tower Gateway.

Use the multi-storey car park at the rear of Selfridges for access to Oxford Street. There are good lifts, helpful staff and level access to the street and store at ground-floor level.

Travel in to London by train and then walk, wheel, use the bus or grab a taxi to get to your destination.

One good thing about having a blue badge in London is you do not have to pay the congestion charge. This saves £8 each day if you drive in the zone between 7am and 6.30pm.

The congestion charge does not apply to vehicles used by disabled people that are exempt from Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) as stated on the vehicle registration document (V5C) issued by the Driving Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

You can drive these vehicles anywhere in the congestion charging zone at any time without paying and do not have to register for this exemption. The only exception is vehicles registered in Northern Ireland. These will have to be registered with Transport for London (TfL) to be exempt.

Blue badge holders (with non-VED exempt vehicles) are eligible for a 100 per cent discount from the congestion charge. This could be your own vehicle, or vehicles which relatives or carers use to drive you.

**'Don't let access put you off London. There is so much to see and do that it is worth a bit of planning'**

Even if you do not have your own vehicle, it is worth registering so you can use the discount when someone is driving you into the congestion charging zone.

## Bus about

All buses in London are now accessible to wheelchair users and other disabled people. However, I am not sure how easy it is to board using the ramp provided, unless you are using a powered wheelchair or are assisted by a fit helper.

## Tour by tube

Some tube stations are accessible, but it is not easy to plan journeys around them.

The Jubilee line between Stratford and Westminster is accessible and links up some useful places.

Free maps, available in stations and online, show which stations are accessible.

The Docklands Light Railway is fully accessible with carriages that are level to and almost touching the platform.

A useful website is Transport for London, which has a journey planner, which allows you to specify the start and finish point of your journey.

By selecting "more options" you can ensure that the results meet your needs as a disabled person.

The website also tells you about river buses, which are the most accessible form of transport.

If you are a family with young children and cannot use public transport you are lucky because children under 11 can now travel free on the tube and bus.

Don't let access put you off London. There it is so much to see and do that is worth a bit of planning.

The city has some of the best museums, galleries and historic buildings in the world. The changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace is unmissable. Shopping in the West End and Knightsbridge is fantastic and you should see all the theatres, restaurants and parks there are.

Go by the Thames, see the entrance to Downing Street and watch politicians be interviewed for television opposite the Houses of Parliament. Ride the London Eye, visit the Tower of London and cross Tower Bridge.

One great advantage is that most of London is fairly flat, with few steep hills in the central area – and you will never run out of things to do.

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

**Parking**

- Find out where to park at *www.parkingforbluebadges.com*
- Buy a copy of the *Blue Badge London Parking Guide* for £4.50, tel: 0870 444 5435, *http://shop.thepieguide.com*

**Congestion charge**

For application forms and further details, tel: 0845 900 1234, textphone: 020 7649 9123, *www.cclondon.com/exemptions.shtml*

**Tube**

Maps showing access to the tube are available online but do not appear to be up to date.

- Tube, *www.tfl.gov.uk/tube/maps*
- Docklands Light Railway, *www.tfl.gov.uk/dlr*

**General transport**

- Journey planner, *http://journeyplanner.tfl.gov.uk*
- Transport for London, tel: 020 7222 1234, textphone: 020 7918 3015, *www.tfl.gov.uk*

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# Disabled people denied at the

The introduction of chip and PIN payment in February added to the stories of problems disabled people encounter on the petrol station forecourt. Nick Kimber toured 11 garages around his home in South Hampshire to see if service is improving

I don't know about you but since I passed my driving test there have been no barriers to my freedom.

Gaining my driver's licence has given me freedom and a career as a driving instructor.

When it comes to filling my car up with petrol my main concern is not the cost, as you might expect, but which garage will have someone available to help me and, if I do get served, can I pay easily.

As my job involves a lot of driving I use the same garage regularly because I know I can get the assistance I need. But there can be times when I get caught out further away from home, so it was useful to test other garages.

I have already learned how useful it can be to have a ServiceCall transmitter*, which is used to attract the attention of assistants inside shops and services.

A transmitter can be used like a TV remote, so you can point it towards a receiver in a petrol station's shop window and push the button. The flashing receiver indicates an alarm has been sounded in the shop and someone should come out to help you.

My second tip is to make yourself a HELP sign, which can be displayed when using ServiceCall.

**10:50** – I pull into my first petrol station, Murco. The forecourt is empty but there is no ServiceCall system and only one member of staff in the shop.

I don't think I'll bother buying here as generally one staff member cannot operate the pump because it needs to be switched on inside.

**11:00** – Tesco has a ServiceCall receiver so, after a few minutes, a member of staff is out to help me.

At Tesco you can pay at the pump, so payment by card was easy, even though the assistant did go over by 2p.

**11:10** – The next two petrol stations I visit have no ServiceCall and only one member of staff working in their shops, so I drive on.

**'Only two out of 11 petrol stations supplied me with fuel'**

**12:30** – I've driven down to Southampton. As I've only filled up once so far, my tank is nearing empty. I pull into a Sainsbury's petrol station where signs direct me to use my horn for assistance.

I use a HELP board and, although the petrol station was full, a member of staff was out to help me within minutes.

She put some fuel in for me and wasn't put out that I wanted to pay by card.

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She went back and got me a receipt to sign as chip and PIN was not available. She even offered to get me a VAT receipt.

1:00 – I arrive at Texaco and it's a station with ServiceCall. But because it is busy the ServiceCall has been switched off. So, no point in waiting here any longer. Beware of busy or short-staffed stations as they may turn off the transmitter.

1:15 – At the next three places I visit, very familiar and irritating situations arise.

I cannot buy petrol because staff ignore my requests for service. This happens at a Total garage and another Tesco, but the worst experience is at a Sainsbury's in Southampton.

I arrive on the forecourt and attract the attention of a member of staff. Five minutes pass. Okay, they must be busy… but there are no customers. Ten minutes pass. I'm getting bored and the traffic is starting to queue behind me. After 15 minutes, I go somewhere else.

The most frustrating thing is that the staff knew that I was there. They were looking straight at me and I had a glaring HELP sign displayed.

I wonder how much money the petrol companies lose by leaving disabled customers on their forecourt for 15 minutes at a time?

2:15 – The car is a bit fuller now, but I'm feeling hungry. I don't believe it, in and out of McDonalds in less than five minutes.

2:45 – Petrol station number 11, Asda in Eastleigh, and ServiceCall is switched off. Well, what can I say - I'm going home.

Only two out of 11 petrol stations supplied me with fuel, which shows the lack of staff training.

In the past I have even been told: "Sorry you've been waiting so long sir. We thought it was the alarm on our freezer going off."

**'Disabled people should be able to fill up their cars independently at any time of day'**

However, on a more positive note, all of the petrol stations I visited were wheelchair accessible and well lit.

Disabled people should be able to fill up their cars independently at any time of day but most petrol stations advise calling in between 10am and 4pm.

They say that outside of these times it can be difficult to provide assistance due to staffing issues.

Do not be afraid to use your horn to attract attention, although be patient as there may be a queue.

Make sure you tell the attendant which type of fuel you require.

Lastly, I would advise using a supermarket petrol station. I have found you have a better chance of being served: six out of the 11 stations I visited were brand name fuel suppliers and I was ignored.

Overall, it was an interesting experience and something I will be looking into further to see if it can be made better in the future.

** For information on ServiceCall, tel: 0800 458 3008 or go to www.service-call.net To buy a transmitter, tel: 0800 214 045.*

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# Top dog

Gareth Almond fought against several organisations who thought he would be unable to run a driving school for disabled people. He tells readers why they should have the same bulldog spirit.

The words Bulldog Spirit – the name of my driving school – sum up my philosophy.

I believe that if you sit back, you will get left behind. You need to have a fighting spirit channelled in the right way in order to achieve your goals.

I became disabled in 1973 in a motorcycle accident involving a drink-driver.

I was a police officer at the time and the incident changed my life forever – I lost my right arm, my pension and my career in the police service.

There was little support available back then and it took more than a year to get my head around what had happened, but there came a time when I had to ask: "Am I going to lie down and take this or am I going to get up and do something about it?".

I have always had a passion for driving and in 1979, after watching Land Rover Trials, I said: "I could do that". So I bought one. It took many months of practice before it all started to come together, but since then I have won more than 250 varied motorsports events, including the 1999 and 2000 British Sprint Leaders Championships, I think making me the most successful disabled competitor in British motorsport.

Throughout the 26 years I have been involved in motorsports, I have only competed against one other disabled driver. I have, however, regularly seen disabled people watching from the sidelines, who often express how much they would love to have a go but cannot because of their impairment. I have often thought that was ridiculous so I decided to help other disabled people enjoy the experience and freedom that driving can offer.

The ability to travel where you choose is so important to quality of life, sense of well-being and feeling like a valued part of society. And the experience, exhilaration and satisfaction of competing as an equal in a sport with non-disabled people is indescribably rewarding and helps to remove huge prejudices.

After intensive research, it was apparent that there were few driving schools in the country prepared to offer tuition to disabled drivers. So, to pursue my dream, I had to become a qualified driving instructor. The cost of training was £2,500. Jobcentre Plus was a great help to me and agreed to finance my studies. The Driving Standards Agency (DSA), however, put as many obstacles in front of me as possible. Still, there were organisations that supported me, including the instructor college that ensured I qualified as an approved driving instructor on my own merits; the Shaw Trust, which funded my £350 training at the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for Mobility; East Lancs 2 Employment, which helped set up my website; and Pendle Enterprise Trust, which helped with £1,000 of equipment.

Even then, the DSA – not the most helpful organisation at the best of times – only allowed me to teach in an automatic vehicle. It took considerable time to convince the DSA I was capable of teaching pupils in manual vehicles.

My vehicles are equipped with infrared controls, which operate all the ancillary systems – wipers, indicators, lights and so on, from a pad on the steering wheel, twin gas pedals for both right or left foot operation, push/pull hand-operated gas and brake levers for those with limited or no leg movement and modified parking brake levers for handless or fingerless operation. Unfortunately, manufacturers of some equipment make items on a one-size-fits-all basis. But, as I am disabled I have been able to empathise with people who have difficulties using equipment, so with the help of a local engineering firm I can modify equipment to suit each pupil's personal requirements. This has greatly eased the road to learning and I have had many grateful customers.

> 'Am I going to lie down and take this or am I going to get up and do something about it?'

Having re-mortgaged my home in order to further my business, it had to be successful. Fortunately, it has exceeded all expectations, judging by the success and satisfaction of my pupils.

I was not able to advertise in the local phone books for the first year, so my two black MG ZR training cars, which are very smart and distinct with their Bulldog Spirit logos, were and still are the best advertising I have. Add to this the referrals from limb and assessment centres, plus word of mouth, and I have had a full book and waiting list from day one.

Still, I am rather more proactive and I am constantly looking to update the vehicles to accommodate others who are more severely disabled.

As for future plans, I soon hope to adapt my Land Rover Discovery – finances permitting – so I can teach disabled people to tow, as anyone wishing to do that has to sit another test.

Eventually, I hope to buy a fourth vehicle, which can allow people to drive from their wheelchair.

I believe in constant personal development and as such I have gained many advanced driving certificates. My ultimate goal is to, eventually, go national as a company and be the most qualified disabled driver and instructor in Britain. Being a disabled instructor of disabled people has caused immense media interest and hopefully the coverage will show people what they can achieve.

As I said earlier, Bulldog Spirit sums me up. If you set your mind to it, there is nothing you cannot achieve. Belief and perseverance will win through.

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Gareth and his Land Rover

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# Your questions answered

## Motability range

Does Motability offer cars that are not traditional disability vehicles like twin cab pickups?
**H J Edwards**

Motability offers over 200 models at nil advance payment.

The current online price list details over 3,000 cars. This list also includes ratings on accessibility, such as door opening angle and seat height.

The contract hire package allows you to exchange your mobility allowance for a new car and you could also benefit from a good condition bonus for cars returned in good order.

- *Motability, tel: 0845 456 4566, www.motability.co.uk.*

## In the driver's seat

Is an easy-to-use adaptation available to adjust the upright angle of the driver's seat of my client's Vauxhall Astra?
**Jacqueline Kelly**

Powering the backrest angle is not a common adaptation, but I have spoken to Cowal Mobility Aids, a company that do a wide range of adaptations for both drivers and passengers, who say there are options available depending on the car and the space available at the side of the seat.

A motor must be fitted to the side of the seat to replace the back angle control wheel and an actuator switch fitted in a place that can be reached from outside the car.

## Scooter solutions

I need advice on what to look for in a motorised scooter.
**Name and address supplied**

RADAR and the Motability Tenth Anniversary Trust are launching a new guide *Getting Mobile* at the Mobility Roadshow in June. This will cover all aspects of choosing and financing a scooter or powered wheelchair.

- *For a free copy contact RADAR, tel: 020 7250 3222, textphone: 020 7250 4119 or email: radar@radar.org.uk Copies will also be available at the Mobility Roadshow.*

## Blue badge blues

My blue badge was stolen from my car and I was wondering how I can protect it in the future?
**Briny Knight**

Any blue badge holder who has been subject to this crime will understand the inconvenience it causes, especially when waiting up to six weeks for a replacement.

When parking your car you should leave it in a well-lit area and a secure car park with CCTV if you can. But as a wheelchair user myself, I know this is not always possible.

You could purchase a blue badge protector from Gowrings Mobility for around £20.

- *Gowrings Mobility, tel: 0845 608 8020, www.gowringsmobility.co.uk*

## Driving independence

I want to learn how to drive so I can enjoy my social life more but the costs are too high and I will need adaptations to any car I use, which will cost even more. I would be grateful if you could point out any financial assistance that helps towards lessons.
**Shane O'Flynn**

The Forum of Mobility Centres can help you to decide which adaptations may be necessary. The Forum is a network of 17 independent organisations offering professional, high quality information, advice and assessment to individuals who have a medical condition or injury which may affect their ability to drive or access a motor vehicle.

- *The Forum of Mobility Centres, tel: 0800 559 3636, www.mobility-centres.org.uk*

## Putting on the brakes

I use push/pull controls for my brake and accelerator and an electronic clutch and I was wondering if an electronic handbrake works on hill starts?
**Barbara Howie**

I imagine it comes down to the skill of the driver in gauging the bite of the clutch. I drove a Kangoo conversion that could be driven from a wheelchair with an electronic handbrake. Unfortunately it was faulty and once on, it stayed on.

## Vehicle suggestions

We are looking for a vehicle to replace our Mercedes Vito Chairman. Our daughter has cerebral palsy (CP) and uses a foam karve chair on a tilt. We are looking for a vehicle that will take her seat and six other passengers. Any suggestions for a car that would suit?
**Julia Boydon**

Ricability has a series of motoring booklets for people with specific impairments including CP. Ricability also provides online factsheets with key measurements for new models.

- *Ricability, tel: 020 7427 2460, www.ricability.org.uk*

## Expert panel

**Don Brereton**
Director of Motability

**Douglas Campbell**
Chairman of Mobilise

**Paul Talbot**
Car reviewer

**Geoff Wilkinson**
Council member, Blue Badge Network

**Ricability**
Independent research charity

Find more of your questions answered and useful contacts at: *www.disabilitynow.org.uk*


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# Nissan's noteworthy new model

Nissan's new hatchback is dependable, roomy and well suited to disabled drivers, Mike Rogers discovers

The new Nissan Note Hatchback is a typical medium-sized hatchback.

Nissan says it has been designed with younger drivers in mind, but I found it has many features which make it suitable for both older and disabled motorists.

I have always liked Nissans. I owned one of the original Micra Hatch series, which gave me many trouble-free years. I have little doubt that this will prove just as reliable.

Nissan has long been in the top bracket for dependability, as most vehicles are manufactured in Japan. However, this model is made in Nissan's UK factory in Sunderland.

I know for a fact that Nissan's managing director once visited his UK factory and said he found the standard of manufacture slightly better than Japan. Encouraging stuff.

Nissan is one of those companies whose cars come with everything in the right place and the Note is no exception.

It comes in a range of engines. The entry model uses a 1.4litre petrol unit, which calls for a remarkably low rate of insurance.

There is also a 1.6 petrol engine, which can have automatic transmission if preferred, and a 1.5 turbo-diesel that can give combined fuel consumption of 55.4mpg.

I tested the 1.6 petrol model with a manual five-speed gearbox and relatively light kerb weight of a little over one tonne. All of this, combined with an output of 110bhp, means the Nissan can live up to its claim of "space matched with pace".

It is a pleasantly roomy vehicle with a good roof height and shallow door sills to ensure easy entry.

The engine runs with a fairly raucous note but to benefit from its lively performance the revs must be used and I didn't find it that off-putting.

The rear seats fold easily and the boot should accept most folded wheelchairs on the reasonably low floor.

Overall, it is a great car for many disabled motorists.

This model's on-the-road cost is between £11,000 and £12,000, and on the Motability contract hire scheme it is available with no advance payment.

For those of us who live in rural locations, a four-wheel drive (4x4) is an absolute must.

Living off the beaten track means that countryside dwellers have to cope with muddy unsealed roads, hills, uneven terrain and much more. So it's nice to see that there is a good choice of some 4x4's offered through Motability.

The organisation offers four Sorento models, out of eight available directly from the manufacturer.

I discovered just how big the Kia Sorento was when I parked it next to a medium-sized Japanese 4x4 and it dwarfed it at 4.5m long and 1.8m high.

Visibility from the driving seat is excellent because you tower over the traffic and have

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# Bigger is better

Although it has a towering presence on the road, the Kia Sorento 4x4 2.5 CRDi XS is more accessible than you would think, Paul Talbot says

a clear view of the road ahead, which is especially useful if you're towing a caravan. No wonder then, that the car won the Caravan Club's tow car of the year 2006.

Getting behind the wheel could be difficult from a wheelchair because the seat is quite high. However, once there, the layout of the controls, leg room and passenger space is excellent.

The interior seats five adults comfortably. In the front seats, passengers have plenty of shoulder space and leg room, which is particularly useful for wheelchair users who may need to store their chair in the passenger compartment. Rear seat passengers are equally well catered for.

I felt very comfortable in this vehicle. It has leather upholstery and heated seats, both good for manoeuvring around inside the car and helping to ease any lower aches and pains you may suffer.

> "Getting behind the wheel could be difficult from a wheelchair because the seat is quite high"

The driving seat is electronically operated and the height and backrest are adjustable. Together with an adjustable steering wheel, it should suit most drivers.

Interior additions like a drop down compartment for glasses and central storage bin for CDs or other paraphernalia are handy.

A quirk of the car is the roof-mounted compass facility and a radio/CD unit, which politely greets you when in operation.

The boot is a good size and not difficult to access, despite the 18inch alloy wheels making, it quite high off the ground.

I loaded both my wheelchair and collapsible scooter in to the boot as a test and both were easily accommodated.

On the road, the car felt secure but cornering was poor, with plenty of roll.

Criticisms I would make are that there is little feedback from the steering and it felt a little over-assisted.

I would recommend you add a park-assist option if it is available, to compensate.

In urban mode, whilst the diesel engine had plenty of clatter on start-up, it felt refined on the move and relatively easy to manoeuvre for such a big car.

The five-speed automatic gearbox is smooth but can't be hurried through the gears.

I took the car on a trip along a motorway and it is capable of maintaining a decent and relaxed pace, going on to a top speed of 104 mph.

Whilst not strictly relevant, it's also capable of the dash to 60mph in 14.5 seconds. That's not bad considering the weight and size of the car. That, together with a feeling of being on top of the world, is one of the car's greatest assets.

As good on the motorway as the rough stuff the Kia Sorento is perfectly suited to people who live in remote areas or use caravans. Try one at your local Kia dealer.

This model costs £24,095 outright with an advance payment of £6,500. The range starts at £19,995 for the manual version.


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| Toyota HiAce 2.4 Diesel Versa | DE52 NWW | 4 Seats, Tail Lift | 10,680 | 10,995 |
| Toyota HiAce 2.4 Versa | DG51 FRP | 4 Seats, Ramp | 27,500 | 8,995 |
| Renault Master 2.5 Diesel | PN52 XDJ | 5 Seats, Ramp | 23,000 | 10,995 |
| Renault Master 2.5 Diesel | PO55 KPE | 5 Seats, Ramp | 1,001 | 14,995 |
| Renault Master 2.5 Diesel | PO53 JKZ | 5 Seats, Ramp | 8,932 | 11,495 |
| Renault Kangoo 1.6 Petrol Auto | PO55 KNZ | 3 Seats, Ramp | 2,147 | 11,495 |
| Renault Kangoo 1.2 Petrol | PJ52 FWH | 3 Seats, Ramp | 14,000 | 8,995 |
| Renault Kangoo 1.2 Petrol | PN04 KBX | 3 Seats, Ramp | 12,863 | 9,995 |
| Nissan Vanette 2.3 Diesel Versa | S682 AKC | 4 Seats, Tail Lift, Central Locking | 60,000 | 5,995 |

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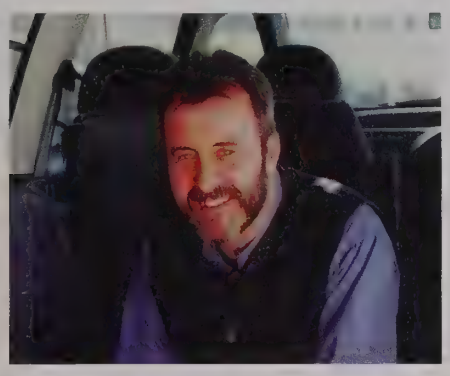
These are widely referred to as WAVs (wheelchair accessible vehicles). The standard of workmanship in converting a particular make and model can vary considerably.

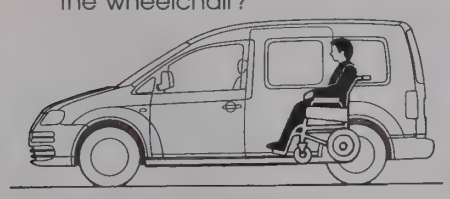
If a make of car appeals to you then look very carefully at the way the conversion has been planned and designed, check the quality of finish both inside the car and, more importantly, underneath!



Rod Brotherwood OBE
*- Managing Director*

## LOADING THE WHEELCHAIR PASSENGER

- The first consideration should be a simple and easy loading procedure.
- A heavy or awkward ramp is not good!
- Is the entry height good for both wheelchair user and carer?
- Is the floor on which the wheelchair travels sloping or level?
  It should be low and level - why? – to ensure the most stable ride and good visibility for the wheelchair passenger.
- Where does the wheelchair passenger sit in relation to other passengers?
- How much space is there for the wheelchair?



## COSTINGS

The car which takes your fancy may be converted by a number of companies and therefore the base cost will be the same. If the whole converted vehicle is cheap then it must be the in the conversion that costs have been cut. The old saying "you get what you pay for" is very true in the conversion market. A look at secondhand prices is also a good indicator of value for money when buying new.

## STANDARDS

There is no single regulatory body for the standard to which a vehicle is converted. Brotherwood Automobility Ltd was the first company to seek out what testing could be applied, and for certification adopted the "Low Volume Type Approval" scheme. As with all good ideas their lead was soon copied – all benefiting the purchasing public.

## WAVCA

In the late 1990's the leading converters joined forces to establish their own Association to promote quality and service. Whilst WAVCA cannot guarantee the product of member converters, the Association as a body is moving forward and addressing the issues of EU Harmonisation of Type Approval and its meaning for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

## BROTHERWOODS 2006 CONVERTED VEHICLE RANGE

At this year's Mobility Roadshow customers can view, try and buy the new "VW Caddy Life" from Brotherwoods which is now fully Type Approved. They will also be taking orders for their Nissan X-Trail conversion which will also be available for test drive. In fact the whole well established range of Citroen, Peugeot, Mercedes, Volkswagen and Fiat WAV conversions will be displayed on the Brotherwood stand.

## NATIONWIDE HOME DEMONSTRATION

If you can't make it to the Roadshow it's well worth a visit to the Brotherwood factory at Beer Hackett near Sherborne in Dorset or have one of their agents visit you to demonstrate a vehicle at home.

**Telephone 01935 872603 for advice** and details on all vehicles to buy or hire or visit the website: **www.brotherwood.com**

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# GOWRINGS MOBILITY OFFER £1,500 OFF ITS VEHICLES

Gowrings Mobility is building on last year's successful Seize the Day competition by offering 12 *DN* readers £1,500 off one of its vehicles. One reader a month will receive this fantastic discount off a Gowrings wheelchair passenger vehicle (WPV).

Each winner will be chosen from applications by an expert panel of disabled motorists – *DN*'s motoring correspondent Helen Smith, Mobilise chairman Douglas Campbell and Mobilise treasurer Denise Webber.

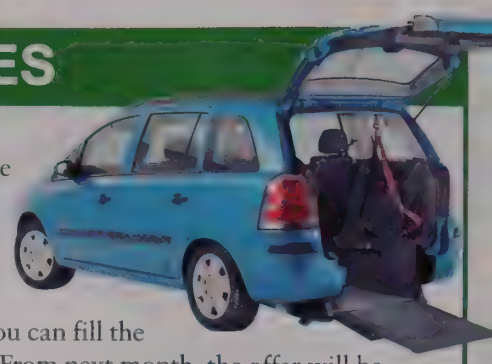
The competition was first run last year, marking Gowrings' 40th anniversary, and was inspired and supported by Dame Tanni Grey Thompson and her autobiography *Seize the Day*.

Linda Ling, Gowrings Mobility managing director, says: "The decision to buy a wheelchair accessible car can often take some people months, if not years. During that time, they simply 'get by' but carry on struggling to go out as a family, or cannot include a wheelchair user in so many trips out.

"However, once they have 'seized the day' and got a suitable car, they tell us they wished they'd made the decision years before, and they are now able to do so much more – such as going to the shops, visiting friends and family, or going on holiday."

"After the great success of last year's competition, we realised the most satisfying part of the promotion was being able to give cars to people who may not have necessarily afforded them otherwise."

This year, each £1,500 contribution can be used towards private purchases of both new and second hand Gowrings WPVs or as the initial rental (advance payment) on Motability Contract Hire, or even as the deposit for Motability Hire Purchase or any other monthly finance plan.



This issue you can fill the form in below. From next month, the offer will be exclusive to *DNOnline*. For further application forms contact Lo-Call 0845 608 8020 or email info@gowringsmobility.co.uk. The finished application should be sent to info@gowrings mobility.co.uk or to Seize the Day Fund, Gowrings Mobility, FREEPOST, Bone Lane, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5ZW.

gowrings mobility

Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Other ..... Name .....

Company (if applying on behalf of one) ..... Job title (if applicable) .....

Address ..... Postcode .....

Telephone number ..... E-mail .....

Who is the wheelchair user?..... Degree of mobility (e.g: ambulant/manual/power wheelchair, can transfer into a car seat)? .....

Current transport situation? (continue on a separate sheet of paper if required)

Why do you think you should receive the £1,500 contribution and how will you "seize the day" with a wheelchair passenger car? (continue on a separate sheet of paper if required)

I hereby confirm that the information I have supplied is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature Date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| **2004 53 Ford Tourneo Connect TD**, 6,000 miles | £10,495 |
| **2004 53 Trafic Versa**, Ramp, 18,000 miles, A/C | £12,250 |
| **2002 52 Doblo JTD ELX**, low floor by Automotive | £8,495 |
| **2001 Y Voyager TD Chairman**, A/C etc | £14,995 |
| **2000 X Brotherwood Sharan TDi**, Auto, 31,000 miles | £17,495 |
| **2000 X Brotherwood Sharan TD**, 34,000 miles, A/C | £13,995 |
| **2000 W Sharan 2.0p**, Automotive Group, 64,000 miles, A/C | £10,495 |
| **2000 W Suzuki Wagon R**, by Jubilee Group | £5,495 |
| **1999 V Expert TD Hill Grau**, A/C etc, 26,000 miles | £8,995 |
| **1999 V Brotherwood Vanette Cargo**, 44,000 miles, 1 owner | £7,495 |
| **1999 T Master 2.2D**, Ramp, 2 owners, 37,000 miles | £7,495 |
| **1997 P Brotherwood Sharan 2.0**, Auto, 31,000 miles | £9,995 |
| **1996 P Caravelle D**, Side Lift, 71,000 miles | £7,250 |
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| Mercedes Vitos | Choice of 6 |
| Kangoo & Berlingo models | Choice of 15 |
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# Practicalities of driving

Lucy Andrews highlights the items of equipment which can make getting behind the wheel and driving easier

## EASY ENTRY

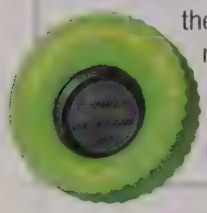
**What?** Getting into a car can be assisted by using the Autoslide. This is a double-layered cushion that is placed on the car seat. The top layer slides on the lower layer making it easier for users to slide sideways onto a car seat. A strap secures the Autoslide to the seat backrest and keeps it in position on the seat. A handle can be used to assist the user to pull themselves across.

**How much?** £47.50 plus VAT

**Where?** Amilake Southern, tel: 01202 890 279, www.amilake.co.uk

## PUT A LID ON IT

**What?** Refuelling can be made easier by replacing the standard fuel cap with the Easy-Cap, that requires no unscrewing. The Easy-Cap has a rubber valve that the fuel nozzle is simply pushed through. It fits 90 per cent of all modern cars. There are two versions – black for diesel and green for unleaded petrol.



**How much?** £15 **Where?** Easy-Cap, www.easy-cap.co.uk

## ROOM FOR A VIEW

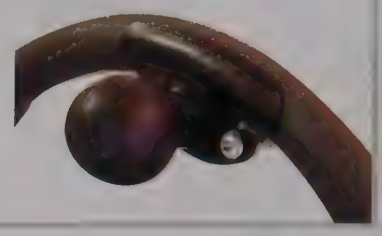
**What?** The Easy Park viewer can help with parking in tight spaces for drivers who have difficulty turning their head to see behind them. The viewer attaches to the rear window of the car and diverts the path of vision to give the driver a view of the area directly behind the car through the rear view mirror.

**How much?** £7.95

**Where?** Mobility Information Service, tel: 01743 340 269, www.mis.org.uk

## STEER IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**What?** This steering wheel knob attaches to the rim of a wheel to provide an alternative grip and also to enable one-handed steering. Different styles are available with a knob, mushroom or peg-style grip. For people who are unable to flex their fingers, a glove and peg grip may provide the ideal solution. Quick release versions are available so that the steering wheel can be used in the conventional way. The knobs are fitted using an allen key.



**How much?** Between £34 and £120

**Where?** Adaptacar Mobility Specialists, tel: 01769 572 785, www.adaptacar.co.uk

## HANDBRAKE HELP

**What?** The Handbrake Easy Release is useful for people who have difficulty using their thumb to release the button on the handbrake and it also provides a more comfortable grip, keeping the wrist in a neutral position. The lever is pulled upwards to release the button and the handbrake.

**How much?** £66

**Where?** Jeff Gosling Hand Controls. For details of local dealers, tel: 0161 430 2151, www.jeffgosling.co.uk

## GOT AN EQUIPMENT QUESTION?

Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF). If you have a question on equipment for Lucy please email editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or post it to the usual address. The DLF helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, and provides information and advice on choosing and using equipment. Contact the helpline on 0845 130 9177 or email: advice@dlf.org.uk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SEE US at Mobility Roadshow – Kemble 8-10 June Stand OS3/4

# Information across the nation

Spending long hours on the road can be lonely, but there are gadgets to help you get to places more quickly and stay in touch. Priya Kotecha highlights the latest satellite navigation systems and communication devices for stress-free travelling

## LUXURY LOCATOR

**What?** A highly recommended, pricey but stylish navigator is the Tom Tom Go 300 – the first portable system to include a full post-code search and up-to-date traffic information. Its touch-screen technology makes it accessible for people with limited dexterity.

This easy-to-use, compact device also has bluetooth technology, allowing users to send data to other bluetooth devices within a 10-metre range.
**How much?** £278
**Where?** Comet, tel: 0870 034 0910, www.comet.co.uk

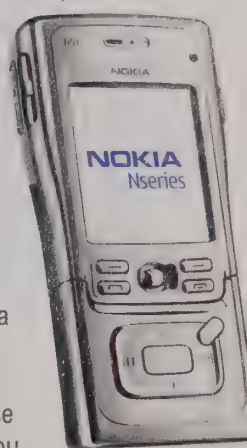
## DICTATE YOUR DIRECTION

**What?** The Navman ICN330 is a great alternative to the Tom Tom without burning a hole in your wallet. It may not include bluetooth technology, but its versatility and voice-activation system make it a driver's dream kit. Functions include an arrival time calculator and software to enable the system to be updated through the internet. It has more buttons than the Tom Tom, but is easy to use and comes complete with a car charger.

**How much?** £169 (exclusive online price)
**Where?** Currys, tel: 0845 850 0535, curryswebsales@currys.co.uk

## MULTI-FUNCTION PHONE

**What?** The Nokia N91 is a mini-entertainment system and mobile phone rolled into one. Complete with bluetooth technology, this phone lets you access the internet, check emails and send text and picture messages. It also has the memory to store 3,000 songs.




With few buttons and a hands-free option, this multi-purpose device lets you stay in touch and listen to music wherever and whenever you like. It has a camera too.
**How much?** £39.99
**Where?** Carphone Warehouse, tel: 0870 087 0870, www.carphonewarehouse.com

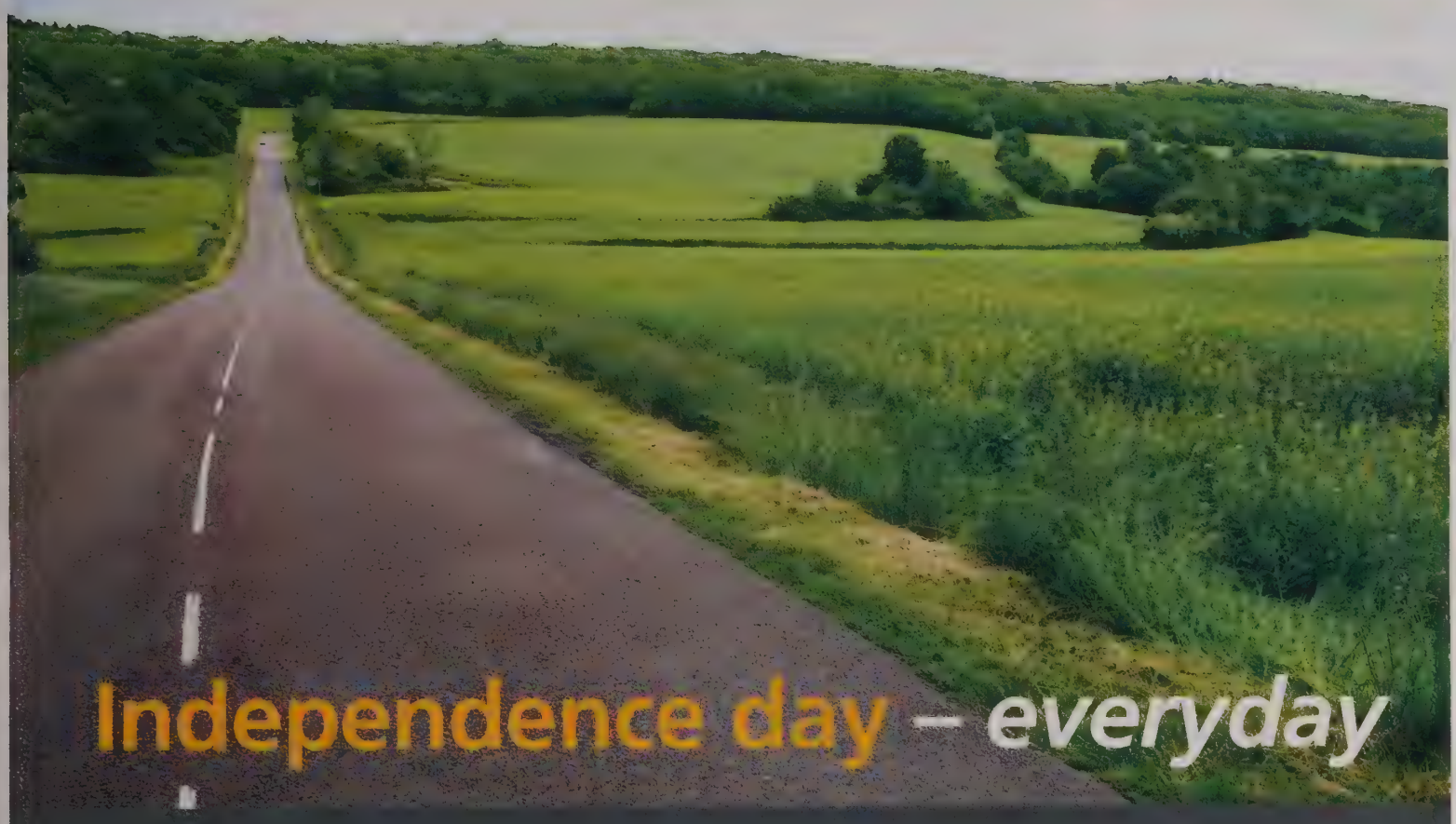
## BLACKBERRY BUZZER

**What?** If you want a bit more out of your phone, then the BlackBerry 8700 is ideal.

Not only does it give you access to the internet and email, it includes a calendar, address book and task list. What's more, all of these features match up to information on your PC, so changes on the phone automatically take shape on the computer too, and vice versa. This nifty piece of equipment has all the facilities of a personal digital assistant (PDA), nicely packaged as a mobile phone with bluetooth technology. With a big screen and hands-free kit, it's easy and safe to use. If you're not comfortable with wearing an earpiece, worry not as there is an inbuilt speakerphone.

**How much?** £43 with a line rental package of at least £20 a month.
**Where?** UK PhoneShop.com tel: 0870 330 6455, www.ukphoneshop.com

SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MOBILITY AUTOCHAIR



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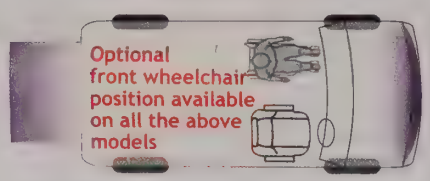
With a wide range of seating configirations available.




### Renault Kangoo

### Citroen Dispatch

### Citroen Berlingo

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# Reluctant role model

PRIYA KOTECHA

## Who is he?

Colin Low CBE, 63, joined the RNIB as vice-chair in 1990 and is an active campaigner for disability rights. He served on the government's Disability Rights Task Force (1997–1999) and was a Disability Rights Commissioner for four years from 2000.

Before helping to set up the Disability Resource Centre at the Greater London Council in 1984, he lectured at the University of Leeds for 16 years.

He now lives in Dalston, north-east London, with his wife Jill and their two children.

While "sheepish" about his role as a Lord, Colin Low will use his new status to tackle variations in employment opportunities for disabled people. He talks to Priya Kotecha about being a role model and crusader

Last month, Professor Colin Low learned he was to become a "people's peer". So, this summer, he will be one of seven awarded a non-party political peerage, which people have been able to apply for since 2000.

But now, as he prepares for a series of meetings and tours to familiarise him with his new role as – he hopes – Lord Low of Dalston, he confesses to feeling a little "shamefaced", "apprehensive" and "sheepish" about his appointment.

He says: "The idea of being addressed as Lord Low feels like wearing airs and graces, which doesn't sit tremendously comfortably with me, but I expect I'll get use to it."

But as chair of the RNIB and president of the European Blind Union (EBU), his appointment has created a buzz within the disabled people's community.

"Somebody wrote to me and said it's good for the EBU, the World Blind Union and every blind person in the world. Well, maybe that's going a bit far," he says.

But he acknowledges that his role at the RNIB and the EBU has contributed towards achieving the peerage.

"I do feel that this honour has been conferred on me to some extent as a representative of the blind or even if it hasn't been, I certainly feel that representative obligation."

While not the first blind person to be made a Lord, Colin says his forthcoming appointment is "symbolic of the increased profile of disabled people in society", but warns those who see it as a sign that disabled people have achieved equality.

"One swallow, though welcome, doesn't make a summer. I think we'll really know that blind people have made it when there aren't just isolated examples but more, not just blind, but more disabled people in the House of Lords," he says.

**'Rubbing shoulders with government ministers, I will have opportunities just to bend their ear'**

In fact, he points out that opportunities for disabled people still vary hugely.

"Seventy-five per cent of blind people of working age are not employed, can't get a job. The benefits' situation is not brilliant for disabled people and there's still a lot of discrimination and rejection around, so the picture is still extremely mixed. There are quite a lot of positive examples of improvement that you can point to, but there's a huge background of non improvement as well."

Trying to change that "mixed picture" is exactly what his new role enables him to do.

"Just by rubbing shoulders with government ministers, I will have opportunities to bend their ear – which is very hard to create otherwise – and use that to RNIB's advantage."

Born partially sighted, Colin spent his childhood years in Penicuik, outside Edinburgh.

"I have a memory of getting in with a crowd of boys that my mother didn't like very much; she thought they were rather a rough lot. They liked to borrow my tricycle and I seemed to remember climbing over roofs with them and I can imagine my mother's heart was in her mouth."

Colin lost his remaining sight in a school accident when he was three, but says he never felt different from non-disabled kids.

"That's one of the great things about being congenitally blind, which is how I regard myself. You don't know life any other way, so you don't have the experience of having to do without sight because you've never had it to do with."

At 11, he attended an RNIB school in Worcester, then studied law at Cambridge University followed by a diploma in criminology at Oxford.

His interest in disability issues surfaced in 1984 when he helped set up the disability resource centre as part of the Greater London Council (GLC).

After six years of writing about disability at City University, Colin joined the RNIB in 2000, where he helped restructure the organisation from one catering for blind and partially sighted people, to one made up of them – one of his proudest achievements to date.

He said: "We've streamlined RNIB and cut out a good deal of fat, and made the organisation a bit leaner and fitter and overcome some financial problems. I've had a hand in that and I'm quite proud of that."

With the demands of his new role, Colin admits his work at the RNIB will be less hand-on.

"I'm going to have to try and discipline myself to cut down. I do like to get involved and I'm not very good at saying no to things," he says.

On the parliamentary front, he is relishing debates on inclusive education and the incapacity benefit (IB) reform.

"[In my younger days] I was engaged in some fairly bitter campaigns against people who thought the only viable form of education for blind children was special schools. Nowadays, you'll more often hear me defending the need to retain some forms of special provision."

And on IB he wants to "hold the government to account".

"It's all very well saying you want to get more blind people off IB and into work, but there are things the government has to do to make this possible. So we want to see the colour of their money, really."

But Colin is keen to avoid being typecast "solely as a disability spokesperson" when he takes his seat.

He says: "There are other things I am interested in, like broadcasting, the arts, especially music, higher education, crime and delinquency. So I would hope to have things to say about other topics."

Practical challenges lie ahead, including access to papers and networking with other peers in the Lords.

"For most people it's second nature to them; they work the room or they recognise someone they want to talk to and buttonhole them. But it's terribly difficult, well, impossible, to do that as a blind person," he says.

"It's a key part of the opportunity that this appointment is; it's got to be solved and I'm sure it will be."

# Time to get equal

## Parental choice in education

Scope is currently researching parental choice in education. This is to find out how parents feel about the choices they are offered. Scope wants to identify the gaps in current provision and offer the Government some ideas about how the choice advisors proposed in the Education and Inspections Bill can support disabled children.

Scope is talking to parents to find out about their experiences. Emily Wooster, Scope's Policy Officer for Education, says "Parents and disabled children face many barriers and a whole range of issues to accessing a good school – these issues are sometimes attitudinal and sometimes because the resources simply aren't available in the local school. This means that parents can feel disempowered by the system. Often they don't know what their rights are, because no-one has told them!"

For more details contact **emily.wooster@scope.org.uk**

## Disability Equality Training news

Chris Sherwood (pictured), Disability Equality Training (DET) Manager, was keynote speaker at the recent European Commission conference on "Best Practices and Future Needs in Diversity and Equality Training" in Poland. A European Network of Diversity trainers was one of the recommendations to come out of the conference which intends to inform the work of the European Commission on Anti-discrimination training.

Closer to home, Scope's, Diversity Works DET team continue to roll out courses on the Public Sector Duty (which comes into force in December 2006) aiming to assist organisations in understanding their new duties to promote disability equality. The courses equip people with the skills and knowledge of current best practice to enable working towards these new objectives. Please contact **craig.nightingale@scope.org.uk** if you or any of your colleagues would like to attend.

## Leadership Recruitment

Scope's Leadership Recruitment programme is a work-based development programme for disabled people of graduate calibre.

People recruited to the programme are employed by Scope for 12 months, during which we assess their career aims and development needs and offer work placements with major employers.

The Leadership Recruitment team have been visiting this year's round of Assessment Centres to recruit new candidates. Those chosen will begin work placements in September of this year. Due to the high demand the deadline for applications has been extended to 1 June 2006. To find out more go to: **www.diversityworks.scope.org.uk**

Diversity Works would like to thank their partners HSBC, Lehman Brothers and Capital One, and also to Pearson Group, PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Welsh Assembly Government who are all supporters of the scheme. If your department or organisation would like to consider offering a work placement in England or Wales or are interested in finding out more about the scheme, please contact **barry.hayward@scope.org.uk**

For more information on any of the articles featured see **www.timetogetequal.org.uk** or contact **Abigail Lock** on **020 7619 7253**.

## Film

### The Devil and Daniel Johnston

*The Devil and Daniel Johnston* is a documentary about the musician Daniel Johnston and his mental health problems.

Johnston was born into a deeply religious and conservative American family. At school he was already a talented film-maker and musician, but after studying art in college, his behaviour became increasingly troubled. At one stage he ended up destitute in a homeless men's hostel. He had to return home to his devout parents and pick up his music career in-between bouts of mental distress.

The main point the film makes is that despite a very interrupted career and a need for constant support, Johnston produced a serious body of work both musically and artistically.

The documentary claims he is a troubled genius, but his songs, whilst heartfelt, seem like tuneless droning and his art reminds me of school-boy scribbles.

His work is compared to Bob Dylan's music, which I think is unjustified.

The scenes from his concerts show pretentious New York bohemian types looking agog in wonder.

His parents provide an interesting sub-plot. The film demonstrates how they love and support their son even though his lifestyle is a contradiction to their own.

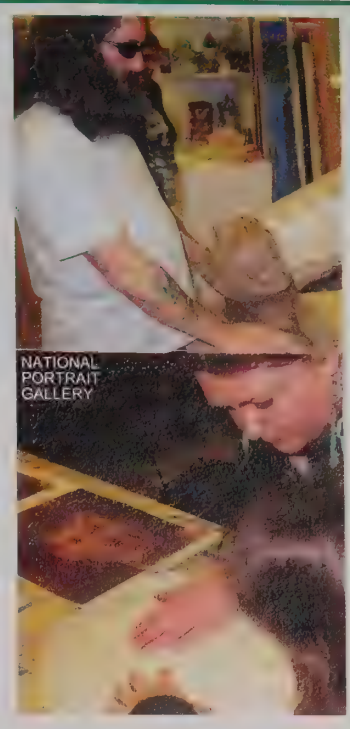
His father in particular is a wonderful character who, despite his strong beliefs, is both his manager and mentor. Now, that is an interesting story.

As for Johnston's musical merits, I'm afraid I am yet to be convinced.

**Michael Shamash**

## Exhibitions

### Fame!




*Fame!* is billed as an exhibition exploring the concept of fame and celebrity from the perspective of visually impaired people, but it does no such thing.

Rather, it offers a series of interpretations by visually impaired artists of works from the National Portrait Gallery's permanent collection.

There were no explanations in the exhibition guide of why the artists chose to interpret the works they did or how their choices explain their concept of fame and celebrity.

Despite this, there should be no reason why visitors cannot view the exhibits and judge them on their own individual merits. But, visitors with visual impairments, like me, will not enjoy the experience for one very good reason - you have to wear gloves before you are allowed to touch anything.

Forget the concept of fame, I'm still grappling with the bizarre concept of blind people donning gloves to look at work produced by other blind people.

The gloves spoiled my visit. I was incapable of distinguishing between the wool, felt and sack in a collage of Noel Coward. It was impossible to spot the silver paper used for Princess Diana's tiara or enjoy the feathers on Harry Potter's owl.

The Braille and audio guides are useful and describe the portraits that inspired the artists, but I had to keep pulling my gloves on and off so I could read the Braille and find the right buttons on the audio guide.

A tactile strip runs along the wall to guide visitors from piece to piece but I couldn't feel it. I'll give you one guess why not.

The gallery staff were extremely helpful – I'd give them four thumbs up, but the exhibition only gets one.

- *Fame! is at the National Portrait Gallery in London to 6 August. Free. Tel: 020 7306 0055, www.npg.org.uk*

**Sunil Peck**

## What's on

### Theatre

Theatre company Full Body And The Voice has teamed up with poet Ian McMillan to create *In the Footsteps of Mr Butler*, which will be at Lawrence Batley Theatre from 1-2 June. The cast includes two actors with Down's syndrome.

- *From £8. Tel: 01484 430 528, www.lawrencebatley theatre.co.uk*

Giant, an inclusive children's theatre company, is touring Scotland with *The Puzzle* to 22 June. The production includes multi-sensory effects and is aimed at children between five and eight years old.

- *Tel: 0141 357 5000, www.giantproductions.org*

Oily Cart theatre company is touring with *Blue*, a sound and light show featuring blues music. It includes a section for young people with autism and will be at the Unicorn Children's Theatre in London from 27 June to 16 July.

- *Tel: 08700 534 534, www.unicorntheatre.com*

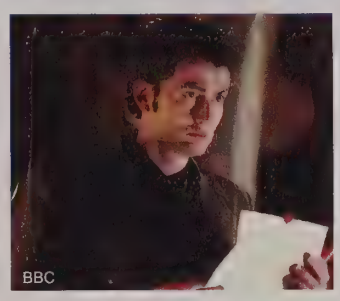
### Exhibitions

*Celebrating Dyslexia*, an exhibition of art and design by students with dyslexia, will be at Plymouth College's Viewpoint gallery from 5–9 June.

- *Tel: 01752 203 434, www.pcad.ac.uk*

**For more what's on:**
www.disabilitynow.org.uk

## TV news




- *Channel Five's* new show *Hospital* is part of *Shake*, a series of weekend programmes for children. The documentary series follows young patients at Birmingham Children's Hospital.
** Sundays, 10.30am.*

- *Dr Who* star David Tennant *(pictured)* is currently filming new drama *Recovery*, in which he plays Alan, a building site manager who has a brain injury and whose personality changes following a car accident. The show, written by Tony Marchant, explores how he tries to rebuild his identity. Tennant is visiting a Headway brain injury clinic as part of his preparation for the role. *Recovery* is currently scheduled to be shown on BBC1 in the autumn.

- Last year's pilot drama *I'm With Stupid* has been commissioned for a six-part series on BBC3. The show features an unlikely relationship between Paul, a wheelchair user (Paul Henshall, currently in *Holby City*) and a homeless man, Sheldon (Mark Benton). The show also has disabled people in the supporting cast. It has just finished filming in Manchester, and will be shown later this year.

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# Naidex 2006

Bob Ross, Jo Bax and Mary Queally highlight the latest products on show at this year's Naidex exhibition

The Comet Stander

## MOBILITY AIDS

Needing a scooter to get around the exhibition, I found this year a much more comfortable event than last year's. The scooters on loan to the public this time had more leg room and were more stable.

Another major asset of this year's show was the fact that much of the equipment was not only well designed but looked good too.

### FALL-BACK POSITION

**What?** The Cougar wheelchair has a unique back recline and tilting system, ensuring stability at all times and in any position. It has a modern, sleek look and is available with a range of accessories.
**How much?** £3,000
**Where?** R82, tel: 0121 561 2222, www.r82.com

### CRUISE CONTROL

**What?** The Trophy comfort scooter is a three-wheeled scooter, which has the unique Trophy suspension system and offers a foot or hand-controlled accelerator option. The seat is height and depth adjustable with a high back. The Trophy comes with a digital speedometer, milometer and steering, which can be easily controlled with one hand. In addition, a non-standard extra is the cruise control option, useful for users who cannot maintain tension on the forward acceleration control.
**How much?** £3,895 (£80 extra for cruise control)
**Where?** Moving People, tel: 01932 858 687, www.movingpeople.net

### SHOP MOBILITY

**What?** The Roma Traveso has been developed by Shoprider. It is a four-wheeled scooter fully enclosed in a cab, with features similar to those of a car, including windscreen wipers, washers, wing mirrors, a horn and lockable doors. Adjustable vents control the air flow in to the cab and the doors are removable, without the need for tools, to enable comfortable use during warmer weather. Steering is achieved using a tiller control and a speed of either four or eight miles per hour is selected with a simple high/low switch.
**How much?** £5,999
**Where?** Roma Medical, tel: 01656 674 488, www.romamedical.co.uk

### COOL CANES

**What?** Classic Canes (*below*) have a wide selection of orthopaedic, folding and extending canes. Bright colours, imaginative, elegant designs and convenient carrying cases all combine to make them a pleasure to look as well as being functional mobility aids.

**How much?** £10-£25
**Where?** Classic Canes, tel: 01460 75686, www.classiccanes.co.uk

### TURBO TRIKES

**What?** WRK have a selection of trikes, which have recently been upgraded and restyled. A new range of "elite" trikes was on display. These come in three sizes with conventional spoked wheels, multi-adjustable handlebars, an effective user-friendly parking brake and a lacquered paint finish. The trikes are designed for ages two to 20. Four different gear options are available, which cater for a range of riding abilities from the very weak to the very strong. There are also a number of body supports available which allow for head-to-toe support, depending on individual requirements.
**How much?** £400-£1,000
**Where?** WRK, tel: 01945 880 014, website under construction.

● *Bob Ross is helpline co-ordinator at the Disabled Living Foundation*

## PAEDIATRIC PRODUCTS

This year the paediatric section at Naidex seemed much smaller than previous years and many of the big manufacturers were conspicuous by their absence. It did not seem as busy and the seminars were not as diverse. However, there were still some excellent new products. The Bugzi was my favourite.

### BABY BUG

**What?** The Bugzi is manufactured by the charity MERU. It is a powered indoor wheelchair designed for children from ages one to five. It is fantastically child-friendly to look at, is small and manoeuvrable and allows young children to explore their environment. Various types of switches and joysticks can used to move it and different seating systems can be used alongside it.
**How much?** From £3,000 for the base, with seating systems from £100. MERU will buy back the base when the child has outgrown it and there should be some reconditioned second-hand ones on the market.
**Where?** Bugzi, tel: 020 8770 8286, www.bugzi.org.uk, www.meru.org.uk

### JAZZ NOTES

**What?** The Jazz EASyS is a supportive pushchair that offers very good quality support whilst retaining the appearance of any recreational pushchair. It combines an adjustable seating system with a lightweight chassis. There is a range of seat positions.
**How much?** From £1,400
**Where?** Tendercare, tel: 01903 726 161, www.tendercareltd.com

### ROLLING FRAME

**What?** The Fix Aluminium Rollator is a brightly coloured lightweight children's rollator frame that will appeal to young children. A seat and backrest are optional extras. It has five height adjustments.
**How much?** From £138
**Where?** Homecraft Rolyan, tel: 08702 423 305, www.homecraft-rolyan.com

### STANDING TALL

**What?** The Comet Stander is a multi-positional standing frame which is easy to adjust and has independently adjustable supports. It has large wheels, making it easy to move. It comes in two sizes, allowing it to be used for children aged between 18 months and 11 years old.
**How much?** This is a brand new product and a price has yet to be decided.
**Where?** JCM, tel: 01775 766 664, www.jcmseating.co.uk

### ROBUST RUMBA

**What?** The Rumba is a new seating system designed to cater for the larger child and teen market. It has a robust frame and the ability to go anywhere in the school environment. It has an electronically height-

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**Treloar Trust** Upper Froyle, Alton, Hampshire GU34 4JX
**www.treloar.org.uk**

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Try out a WRK trike

The Trophy comfort scooter

The colourful Bugzi

The larger style Rumba

adjustable seat, a gas-assisted tilting system and an excellent postural control harness, as well as many other accessories.
**How much?** From £1,500
**Where?** G and S Smirthwaite, tel: 01626 835 552, www.smirthwaite.co.uk

● *Jo Bax is a senior paediatric physiotherapist for North East Lincs and Goole Hospitals NHS Trust*

## HOUSEHOLD AIDS

**There was a range of innovative and useful products and services on display this year, including:**

### HIDDEN SUPPORT

**What?** The Bra Angel is designed to help fasten bras for women who have lost the use of one arm, but who are otherwise quite dextrous, for example following a stroke or fracture. It sits around the neck like a pendant and provides a stable holder for one end of the bra between the breasts. The other end is then passed around the body and the bra is fastened using one hand. It is lightweight and size-adjustable.
**How much?** £13
**Where?** Buckingham Healthcare, tel: 02392 790 977, www.buckinghamhealthcare.co.uk

### WOOLLEN WARMTH

**What?** The Hand Muff is a natural wool fleece hand muff, with a tweed cover. The hands lie one in front of the other in their own separate chambers. Originally designed as a travel accessory, these muffs are useful for anyone who has cold hands or who likes the localised heat, whether indoors or out.

The muff

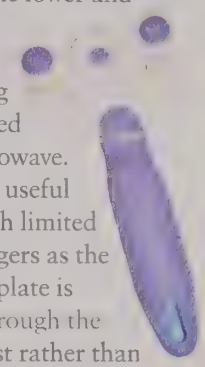
comes with an attached neck strap and is available in seven colours.
**How much?** 19.90
**Where?** Woolana, tel: 02838 335 060, www.woolana.com

### EASY CLEAN

**What?** The Buckingham Easywipe is a gently angled handle which holds toilet paper at one end in a rounded silicone holder. This allows people with limited reach or dexterity to clean themselves having used the toilet. The paper is then ejected by pressing the handle at the other end. It can be cleaned by wiping with soapy water. It comes with an opaque carrying case.
**How much?** £21.95
**Where?** Homecraft Rolyan, tel: 08702 423 305, www.homecraft-rolyan.com

### FINGER FOOD

**What?** The Buckingham Coolhand is a handle with prongs designed to reduce the risk of burning your hands on plates warmed by hot food in a microwave. The lower and upper prongs support the plate, allowing it to be removed from the microwave. It may also be useful for people with limited grip in the fingers as the weight of the plate is transferred through the hand and wrist rather than just the fingertips.



**How much?** £6.99
**Where?** Nottingham Rehab Supplies, tel: 0845 121 8111, www.nrs-uk.co.uk

● *Mary Queally is a senior occupational therapist*

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# Dear Rachel

● love and loneliness ● personal problems ● advice and support

Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

## Wheelchair woes

I was forced to go on the NHS wheelchair voucher scheme and was awarded £815. I have been unable to find a chair for this price and cannot add any more money myself. I have tried to get advice from NHS wheelchair services and my occupational therapist but they have been useless. Could you advise me where to go from here and could you tell me how I can complain about NHS wheelchair services and my therapist, who are no help.
**Gary, Wigan**

All voucher schemes are inadequate in relation to the overall cost of a chair. If you are not in a position to meet the additional charges, or to pay for repairs and maintenance of your current chair, then you must seek funding from other sources, namely charitable trusts.

You could go to your local library and refer to the *Directory of Grant Making Trusts* and look in the categories dealing with physical disability, or charitable trusts who buy equipment for people with disabilities, and make an approach. Sadly, their response is not going to happen overnight.

You could also approach the local Lions Club or Rotary Club.

Under the terms of the NHS wheelchair service scheme, the wheelchair user is given a wheelchair that meets their clinical need. If however, the client wishes to have a chair that is more upmarket then that is the choice of the wheelchair user.

At the point of entering the voucher scheme the NHS normally relinquishes all responsibility unless there is an issue over repairs not being carried out by the dealer.

Check out the chair that is most suitable for you and, when you have an invoice, approach a charitable trust.

As for the complaint about your occupational therapist, your should contact the GP who referred you, then your local NHS trust.

## Building problems

I had an extension built to accommodate a study and accessible toilet but it went wrong and I lost a lot of money. I want to sue the builder. I have contacted the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) many times but have had no response. I am not sure what to do.
**Ken, by email**

The purpose of the DRC is to advise on instances where disabled people have been discriminated against, or treated less favourably than non-disabled people because of their impairment.

From what you say, the difficulties you have had with your builder were not simply a result of you being disabled, but also a case of shoddy workmanship.

However, your builder may be in breach of the Disability Discrimination Act because he has a responsibility to provide building work that meets all building regulations, regardless of whether the customer is disabled or not.

I would suggest that you contact Consumer Direct. This is an advice line funded by the Department of Trade and Industry. They can advise you on making a complaint against the builder concerned.

The Trading Standards Institute provides information on consumer complaints so you could visit their website.

- *Consumer Direct, tel: 08454 04 05 06, textphone, 08451 28 13 84, www.consumerdirect.gov.uk*
- *Trading Standards Institute: www.tradingstandards.gov.uk*

## Long wait for a shower

I have MS and have a number of medical problems. I had been assessed as needing an anti-scald shower but I have now been told that a cheaper one will meet my needs. I do not believe this is true and do not know who to turn to. It astonishes me that people can be treated in this way.
**Gillian, by email**

If you have been formally assessed by social services and told you need an anti-scald shower, then they must abide by the findings of their own assessment. If they are now formally advising you that a different, cheaper shower is sufficient for your needs, then they must give you clear reasons why their assessment has changed.

If, on the basis of your impairment, you have been assessed as needing equipment which is not being provided, the social services may be in breach of the Disability Discrimination Act. This means they may not treat you less favourably because of a disability.

There are three places where you can seek advice. The first is the Disability Rights Commission, which advises on the implementation of the DDA. The second is the Disability Law Service which advises on all aspects of the law as it relates to disability and finally, you might want to contact your local DIAL (Disability Information and Advice Line) office.

I hope that this matter will be resolved properly and that the social services provide you with the equipment which best meets your needs.

- *Disability Rights Commission, tel: 08457 622 633 textphone: 08457 622 644, www.drc-gb.org*
- *Disability Law Service, tel: 020 7791 9800, textphone: 020 7791 9801, www.dls.org.uk*
- *DIAL UK, tel /textphone: 01302 310 123, www.dialuk.info*

## Sexually frustrated

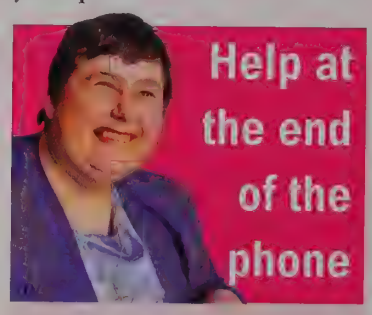
I am 35, single and use a wheelchair most of the time. I have a brain tumour which affects my co-ordination Being single, I experience sexual frustration but find it difficult to masturbate. I was wondering whether there was a toy or aid available that might help me with this?
I would be grateful for any advice.
**Name withheld, by email**

The problem you describe is common amongst disabled people and I can see no reason why it couldn't be resolved, with an aid or the support of another person – provided you felt comfortable with this.

I suggest that you contact the Outsiders Club, an organisation that advises disabled people on sexual and relationship matters. They operate a confidential advice line which operates each weekday between 11am and 7pm and their website also contains useful information.

- *The Outsiders Club, helpline: 0707 499 3527, www.outsiders.org.uk*

**For the next two months Lin Berwick will answer your questions.**




*DN*'s telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.

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# ASK THE READERS

Does anyone know of any quality dating websites, groups or events that have an understanding of disabled people's needs and will help me meet someone?

## Secure socialising

Outsiders organises events to help people who feel isolated socialise. They also provide a helpline*, leaflets and a website**. The website provides a list of dating services which cater for disabled people. The quickest way to access this is to click on the bottom left-hand side, on links and then on social and dating roups. There are loads listed there that are for disabled people.

**Alan Taylor**

** Tel: 020 7354 8291*

*** www.outsiders.org.uk*

## Highly recommended

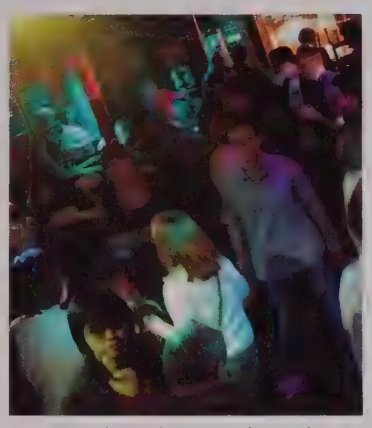
I have found two good dating sites: w*ww.whispers4U.com* and *ww.disabledunited.com*

**Maria**

## Inclusive events

You could try events like Frogtastic *(pictured)*, a club night for people with learning difficulties and their friends in Manchester, which is run by the Heroes Project*.

Historically, social gatherings for people have been based on old-style social clubs, where attendees may be pacified with table tennis, snooker, dominoes, etc. We recognise that all people need to meet, dance and socialise.



In reality, the social needs of disabled people are the same as everybody else's. We recognise that disabled people must be treated equally and with respect.

There has been a steadily developing inclusive club scene for some time now, especially in London and the south of England. Club nights are a popular way for disabled people to meet each other, make friends, chat and socialise.

**Spokesperson for the Heroes Project**

**Tel: 07946 424 075*

**NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:**

**I am partially sighted and people think I'm rude because I don't make eye contact. How can I make people understand?**

Send your answers to "Ask the readers" at the usual address or email: *editor@disabilitynow.org.uk*

# SIMON SAYS

The internet has given disabled people access to a whole new world of dating but it does have its downsides

Finding that special relationship, or just finding someone to have some sexy dates with, is an issue for everyone.

Since the advent of the internet we can now look for that special person from the comfort of our home.

The internet gives us access to a huge number of people that we otherwise would not have met. But maybe the old saying, "you have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince", should be rephrased for the internet "you have to chat to a lot of nerds before you get a good date".

The risks of dating online are widely publicised, but is an internet date any different from a blind date?

On the positive side, you get to know someone for who they are.

If you start chatting or emailing, the relationship can begin on the basis of personality, not what you look like. Also, your impairment need not be the first and most dominant issue.

On the down side, people can lie about their age, looks and circumstances.

Your tall, dark and handsome wheelchair athlete with a special interest in foreign films could turn out to be a non-disabled creep with an interest in trainspotting and unsavoury home video-making. But this can be true of all blind dating, singles bars and even the guy your best mate set you up with.

**'The internet gives us access to a huge number of people we otherwise wouldn't meet'**

What should you do to make sure you get the best from dating sites?

Recognise that first impressions, whilst important, are not always right. Don't give out too much information about who and where you are until you feel you know who you are talking to.

Remember that internet relationships can be based on fantasy and the reality can be disappointing. It is best to chat on msn or a similar service as well as emailing, prior to any meeting. By chatting you can ask questions and get a feel for the person.

Recognise that there are always more men than women advertising online. Men will have to work hard to compete with other men, while woman need to protect themselves from being taken advantage of, but again this isn't unique to internet dating.

The internet offers disabled people access to many more people and a chance to get to know someone for their personality.

Of course, hooking up with someone miles away can be problematic and meeting more people can lead to more rejection, but internet dating gives disabled people a chance to mingle without their impairment making the first impression.

**Simon Parritt is a chartered counselling psychologist.**

**Send your relationship questions to "Simon says" at 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW or email:** *editor@disabilitynow.org.uk*

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## What's On

**The University of Wolverhampton** is holding a conference titled Deaf People: Skills for Work and Life on 2-3 June. The event will include workshops and will look at technology developments. *Tel: 01922 614 794, textphone: 01922 614 795, www.deafskills.co.uk*

**The National Autistic Society** is holding a range of conferences and seminars in June across the UK. From £47. *Tel: 0115 911 3367, www.autism.org.uk/conferences*

**London Zoo** is holding a children's day on 10 June. There will be reduced admission rates and discounts, a jazz band, a meet the animals session and face painting. There will be a tour for visitors with visual impairments and sign language interpretation for all daily events. New attractions for 2006 include African zebras and tropical butterflies. From £6. No charge for children under three and carers. *Tel: 020 7722 3333, www.londonzoo.co.uk*

**The Mobility Roadshow** will be at Kemble Airfield near Swindon from 8-10 June. The show will enable visitors to see and test the latest mobility products. There will be a crèche and entertainment for young visitors. *Tel: 0870 770 3222, www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk*

**The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)** is holding its annual conference on 16 June at the Metropole hotel in Birmingham. The conference will include presentations and seminars. From £115. *Tel: 0121 234 9820, email: events@ndcs.org.uk, www.ndcs.org.uk*

**The Lin Berwick Trust** will hold an inaugural lecture titled Airing our Differences on 28 June at the Crown Church of Scotland, Russell Street, London. The lecture by Sue MacGregor will mark the opening of Denis Duncan House, the trust's second holiday home. 6.45pm. Free. *Tel: 01787 882 111, www.thelinberwicktrust.org.uk*

**Empowering People Back to Work: Engaging the Health Sector to Support Employees** will be held on 29 June at the Cavendish Conference Centre in London. The keynote speaker is Margaret Hodge MP. From £195. *Tel: 020 7324 4330, www.neilstuartassociates.com*

**ADHD in Suffolk** is holding Facts not Fiction! Enough's Enough!! at the Suffolk constabulary headquarters in Ipswich, Suffolk, on 29 June. The conference will focus on the social, occupational and economic impact of ADHD. £99. *Tel: 0870 881 0464, www.adhdinsuffolk.org*

## DN next month

*All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 24 June*

### MOBILITY MATTERS

Motoring correspondent Helen Smith reports from the 2006 Mobility Roadshow, Kemble Airfield, which takes places between 8 and 10 June. She'll be reviewing the latest products and services on show at the event, checking out the new venue and talking to readers. You might catch her at the *DN* stand – A2 – on Thursday, as well as others from the team.

### CONSERVATIVE CREDENTIALS?

*DN* reports from the first of several major seminars aimed at defining Tory policy on disability. From the health and social services seminar, and those in future, *DN* will ask whether the party really could meet the needs of disabled people.

## LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winners of the Switch sticks in the April issue were: A.Vaughan from Bucks, D.H.Wright from Lincs, R.Hall from W.Sussex and C.A.Davies from Cardiff. The winners of the Aquabowl were: M.Walden from Northampton, B.Salmon from Cornwall and E.Hobson from London.

## Appointments

**Lorna Reith** is leaving her post as chief executive of Disability Alliance to concentrate on her role as a Labour councillor in Haringey. Vanessa Stanislas, currently deputy chief executive (temp), will become the new chief executive.

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## UP FOR GRABS ONLINE OFFER

See our website for an exclusive online offer on the Shewee – a portable urinating device for women recently launched in the UK. Shewee is giving away ten units, worth £5 each. The device is a moulded plastic funnel, which allows women to urinate sitting or standing without removing clothing. This gives greater independence on the move and eases discomfort for disabled people, including wheelchair users. To enter, see www.disabilitynow.org.uk
To find out more about Shewee, tel: 0844 800 8270, www.shewee.com

# Parents - Need Equipment For Your Child?

- NO FUNDING AVAILABLE?
- BEEN REFUSED?
- FACING BIG DELAYS?
- CAN NOT GET ASSESSED?

*"Every day disabled children are denied basic aids - this can't go on"*

We need to hear of your real life experiences now. Your story will help highlight to decision-makers the major problems with the provision of all sorts of equipment for disabled children in the UK. Please help us tell the real story of children's disability equipment through our IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK campaign.

**We need to hear about the problems you have had in getting essential care and equipment such as mobility equipment (all kinds), seating (including car seats), beds, therapy equipment and much more.**

- **Has any of this happened to you recently?**
- **Are you still waiting for a decision?**
- **Is bureaucracy causing delays?**

**Have you been told to raise the money yourself or apply to charities, when statutory services should provide items?**

Please register your experience urgently, by going to **www.bdfnewlife.co.uk/yourstory** or by Calling our free-phone hotline on **0800 902 0095** to share your story. You can leave your story anonymously, everything you tell us will be treated in strict confidence. You can also visit our website for info on how to make an application to us for a Child and Family grant.

**Is your caring professional as frustrated as you?**
They can also leave their own message in confidence. Please tell them about this campaign.

newlife

Tel: 0800 902 0095
www.bdfnewlife.co.uk/yourstory

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## DN LINAGE

Tel: 020 7619 7320, Fax: 020 7619 7331, Minicom: 020 7619 7332,
email: patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk

### Personal

**HI, I'M A** 35 years old woman, living in SW England and am a wheelchair user. Still looking for 'Mr Right'. I don't drive but can use trains and taxis. Lots of interests incl swimming, reading, writing, crafts and shopping as I love going out. Also, any friends or penfriends who see this advert, please get in contact and I'll write back. Box no: 324

**YOUNG LOOKING WHITE** male, 63, seeks younger ladies for pen friends, possible meetings (white, black, any nationality – from London/Midlands/South West area including Cornwall). I like driving my 4x4 to nice places including the countryside. Box no: 325

### Cars/vans/caravans

**CITROEN SYNERGIE 1.9** TDSX N reg, 140 kg rear hoist, 106k miles, fsh, blue, twin sunroof, 7 seats, one owner. £3,900. Tel: 01803 856676 (Brixham, Devon).

**AUTOCRUISE HORIZON 2**001(Y reg), 7,800 miles, MOT April 2007. Peugeot Boxer 2.8 HDI turbo diesel. 5 speed gearbox. Full service history. Immaculate condition. Air con, rear door with hydraulic ramp. Double and single bed. Driver and passenger seats, swivel bench seat plus two facing seats with table. Mains hook up with battery charger. Gas and electric space heating. Four burner hob with oven, refrigerator. Shower/toilet with disabled access. Cost £32,000 new, asking £24,500. Tel: 01452 332829 (Gloucester) or email: ajt.gtbt@zen.co.uk

**DODGE (CHRYSLER) VOYAGER** 3.0, drive from wheelchair auto, 1996 (N reg), left hand drive, 4 seats plus wheelchair, 48k miles. FSH, MOT and taxed till Feb 2007, zero effort steering, remote side door and ramp, electric gearbox, electric handbrake, electric windows, hand controls, wheelchair tie downs plus Unwin clamps and swap over front driver's seat. Suit disabled driver or ideal for someone looking for an accessible vehicle for a wheelchair passenger. One owner since new. £3,000 ono. Available June/July. Tel: 01726 67254 (pm) Cornwall.

**VAUXHALL ZAFIRA COMFORT** 16v 1.6, Prestige Blue, 2003, pas, air con, e/windows. With Gowrings wheelchair conversion incl rear loading ramp, seats 5 including wheelchair. Only 28k miles, one owner from new, fsh, MOT expires March 2007. In immaculate condition, £14,995. Tel: 01237 451603 (Bideford, Devon) or email: piercyforge@btinternet.com

**ROVER METRO 1.1**, H reg, 32k miles. With a hoist and Sterling 3 buggy. In vgc, fsh, full tax and MOT until Feb 07. Only one owner from new, £1,100. Tel: 01329 287105 (Fareham, Hants) or email: francis24v@ntl-world.com

**SUZUKI WAGON R** 1.3, auto, reg May '01, Jubilee wheelchair conversion with access via rear ramp. Seats 3 + wheelchair, 24k miles, e/windows and e/mirrors, central locking, full MOT and fsh. Excellent condition, one owner from new, £5,200 ono. Tel: 01254 237040 (Lancs) or mobile: 07775 581167.

**PEUGEOT 807 2.0** LX, auto, 2003 with Constables Carchair conversion for front seat passenger. Seats 5 including wheelchair. Includes Constables electric wheelchair (with new battery), remote control entry and exit. Warranty until June 06, only 31k miles, one owner from new, full Peugeot service history, climate control and CD. Cost £28,000 new, asking £13,995 ono. Tel Andrew: 07970 421848.

**VW SHARAN 1.9TDI** AUTO (1997). Brotherwood Conversion, 59" Raised Roof, Rear Access Ramp and Inertia Belts, seats 4 plus wheelchair. Midnight Blue, pas, front electric windows, central locking & air con. F.S.H, MOT until Aug, £6,000 ono. Tel: 01527 68363 (West Midlands/Gloucestershire) or mobile: 07866098477.

**FORD FOCUS ZETEC** 2.0, '51 reg, e/windows and e/mirrors, pas, central locking, CD player, alloy wheels. With Constables Carchair conversion incl electric hoist for front passenger seat, can carry 5 people maximum. Under 31k miles, full MOT and tax, fsh, in excellent condition, £8,500 ono. Tel: 01637 879697 (Newquay, Cornwall) or mobile: 07979 230942.

**NISSAN PRAIRIE 2.0** Mk 2, K reg, 120k miles, pas, e/windows, seats 5 incl wheelchair. Brotherwood conversion incl rear ramp. In good condition, MOT expires October, £1,750 ono. Tel: 01189 722559 (Nr Reading).

Cont'd pg 26


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**FORD TRANSIT 2.0** 1990, auto, pas, reversible left leg drive. Rear RICON tail lift, will take scooter. 5 seats and wheelchair. £2,500 ono. Tel; 01932 873895 (Worthing).

**RENAULT TRAFIC VERSA** 2.2, pas, 1995 (N reg), 33k miles only. With Widnes Car Centre conversion incl manual ramp at rear with tracks and inertia belts. In very good condition, MOT expires Oct '06, only 2 owners from new, fsh. £2,450 ono. Tel: 01244 660800 (Chester) or email: philbrowett@hotmail.com

**VW SHARAN CARAT** 2.0, P reg, pas, abs, e/windows and e/mirrors and CD player. Brotherwood conversion incl rear ramp and 4 anchor points, carries 5 including wheelchair. Fsh, full MOT, one owner from new, high mileage hence asking £2,700 ono. Tel: 01922 451587 (W. Midlands) or email: pippa.bellis@btinternet.com

**GOWRINGS SWIVEL SEAT**, 180 degrees swivel, fits a Vauxhall Zafira or similar, can be adapted for other vehicle. Asking £650 ono. Tel: 020 8529 3268 (East London).

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.2** 16 valve, 03 reg. Wheelchair accessible, lowered floor (56" headroom), rear ramp, winch, seats 3 plus wheelchair. 27,500 miles, fsh and full MOT. £7,950. Tel: 01494 875475 (Bucks).

**PEUGEOT EXPERT 2.0** Hdi diesel, silver metallic, registered August 2005, 4,400 miles. Allied Vehicles wheelchair conversion with underfloor Easiglide side door entry ramp, plus an electrically controlled controlled step. Housing for one wheelchair with full tiedown system. Room for wheelchair and 3 passengers in rear plus 2 in front. As new condition, only one owner from new. £10,995. Tel Marion Burns: 01324 841613. Email: donnaburns42@hotmail.com

**HONDA CRV WEST** One 2.0 '51 reg, 42k miles, 2 owners, pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, full MOT. With Steerings Development wheelchair conversion incl Carony manual wheelchair system and electric swivel Recaro seat installed 18 months' ago for front passenger. In excellent condition, cost £20,000 approx for car and conversion, asking £12,000 ono. Tel: 01189 352629 (Reading) or email: susan.thompson@onetel.net

**SUZUKI WAGON R** 1.3 auto, registered June '01 with Jubilee wheelchair conversion incl rear ramp, seats 3 plus wheelchair user. Only 12k miles, central locking, air con, full MOT 'til April '07, fsh. Vgc, only one owner from new, £5,450 ono. Tel: 01273 240253 (Brighton) or mobile: 07887 732103.

**ADAPTED FORD TRANSIT** Van 1995 turbo diesel with remote side entry Ricon lift, Automatic tie down, touch start, press button gears, electric handbrake. Joystick steering or steering wheel option.1 owner from new. MOT end Nov. 68k miles, very reliable great van to drive. Can be driven conventionally or by wheelchair user. £3,500. Tel: 01273 843340 (Sussex).

**CHAIRMAN CITROEN BERLINGO** 1.8, diesel, V reg, 57k miles. With Gowrings conversion incl rear ramp, inertia belts and 1 rear seat. £2,500 (Brighton). Tel: 01273 201999 or email: gilder6646@aol.com

**FORD FOCUS ZETEC** 1.6 auto. Reg Nov 2000. Pale Green Metallic. Elec windows and mirrors, PAS, central locking, Radio/CD player, alloy wheels. Constables Carchair conversion, incl electric hoist for front passenger seat. Original seat etc included, can carry 5 people. 32k miles, full MOT and tax, fsh, in excellent condition, £4,750 ovno. Tel: 0161 256 4372 (Manchester) or mobile: 07734511924. Email hemmings_karen@yahoo.co.uk

## Wheelchairs/scooters

**SPECTRA ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR** with kerb climber and lights. Used 6 times, Cost over £3,500, asking £2,000 ono. Tel anytime: 0161 775 9868 (Manchester).

**ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR CRUISER** Plus. Indoor / outdoor use. Dual control, one piece footrest, collapsible. Recently serviced. 5 years old but hardly used. £2750. For further information call Craig on 07737 045406 (Brighton, East Sussex) or email craig.borrett@ntlworld.com

**GILLINGHAM TILT WHEELCHAIR** for sale with armrests and J2 cushion. Unused but cost £2,500, asking £995 ono. Tel: 01206 844146 or e-mail kibbled12@aol.com

**VIENNA SHOPRIDER LIGHTWEIGHT** powerchair. Compact, turns within own length. Easy to dismantle. R/H joystick, flip-up footrest, charger and user manual. VGC, cost £1495, 1 yr old. Asking £495. Tel. 01920 438882 (Herts) or email: hazel.barton@tesco.net

**ROLTEC ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR.** Cost £12,000. Used once. Hi-lo seat. Tilt in space. Leg raisers. Reclining backrest.Lights. All leather seating. Electric tie-down system. £8,000. Tel anytime: 01785 604420 (Staffs).

## Household & Famili

**TERRY HARMONY THROUGHFLOOR** wheelchair lift, 2nd hand bought in November 2002. Freeway Lift Services will remove lift from house at vendor's and do a free survey to assess suitability of the new home. Installation costs depends on circumstances. £500 negotiable. Tel Ann: 020 8394 2493.

**ACORN STAIRLIFT. ONE** flight, straight run, can be seen working. Never been used, vendor will dismantle if required. Either left or right fitting, genuine reason for sale. Asking £800 ono. Tel: 020 8529 3268 (East London).

## Property for sale

**CRAWLEY, WEST SUSSEX** – large end terrace property in quiet cul-de-sac providing spacious family accommodation. 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, separate living and dining room. Fully wheelchair accessible extension with own level access shower/WC. Ideal for disabled family member. Newly built wheelchair accessible kitchen and dining room. £229,950. Tel: 01293 441144. www.accessible-property.org.uk

• Recruitment (on page 26 to 31)

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## PERSONAL ADS

For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £10 payable to *Disability Now* with your ad. This is to help cover our costs.

# DN Classified linage advertisements

**Please use this form if you are a private individual and want to place a classified advertisement (not Personal adverts). Write clearly in block capitals. Remember to allow a space between words. Use each space in the line even if you have to split words at the end.**

**Choose an advert style from far right.** Send this coupon with your name, address, daytime telephone number and a cheque for the total made payable to *Disability Now* to: 8 Market Road, London N7 9PW

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

*DN* reserves the right to edit advertisements if necessary. Completion of this form does not guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. **Sorry no refunds.** *DN* is a non-profit making newspaper.

## Linage styles

**EXAMPLE OF** standard linage advert. Cost: £9 per line. Tick box below.

**EXAMPLE OF**
semi-display linage advert. Cost: £9 per line plus £10. Tick box below.

**EXAMPLE OF**
box linage advert. Cost: £9 per line plus £20. Tick box below.

- ○ Standard linage advert
- ○ Semi-display linage advert
- ○ Box linage advert

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**PEUGEOT EXPERT 1.9 LTR DIESEL** 2001, Blue, Very good Condition, 31,000 miles, 5 door, Electric reels, Electric Winch, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Service History. **£8,750**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.4 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 24/11/00, Silver, 3 seats, Good Condition throughout, 5 speed manual, 34,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Twin Side Doors. **£7,400**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.2 LTR 16 V PETROL** Date first registered: 13/11/02, Red, 3 seats, Very good Condition, 5 speed manual, 27,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Twin Side Doors. **£7,795**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.2 LTR 16V PETROL** Date first registered: 12/06/03, Blue, 3 seats, Condition: As new, 5 speed manual, 19,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric Winch, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking. **£8,750**

**RENAULT MASTER SWB 2.5 LTR DIESEL** Date first registered: 17/03/98, Yellow, 3 seats, Very good condition, 5 Speed manual, 48,000 miles, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Allows Wheelchair to front passenger position, Includes powertec wheelchair, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Non-Slip Flooring, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Service History, Side load door, Two rear saloon passenger seats, Wheelchair access including restraints, safety belt & ramps. **£6,350**

**CITROEN BERLINGO 1.6 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 08/04/03, Silver, 3 seats, 1 owner, Very good condition, 5 speed manual, 41,000 miles, 5 door, Air conditioning, Air Bag, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Lowering rear suspension, Non-Slip Flooring, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Twin Side Doors. **£9,200**

**KIA SEDONA 2.9 LTR TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 03/12/02, Metallic green, 4 seats, Excellent Condition, 5 speed manual, Mileage: 18,000 miles, 5 door, A.B.S., Air Bag, Air conditioning, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Rear Saloon Heating/Cooling System, Remote Central Locking, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£13,950**

**TOYOTA PREVIA 2.0 LTR TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 17/04/02, Metallic Blue, 5 seats, Immaculate Condition, Manual, 25,000 miles, MOT until: 25/04/07, 5 door, A.B.S., Air Bag, Air conditioning, Alloy wheels, Cruise Control, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/single CD player, Rear Saloon Heating/Cooling System, Remote Central Locking. **£14,495**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.4 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 08/11/02, Red, 3 seats, Automatic, 25,000 miles, 5 door, A.B.S., Automatic Transmission, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Twin Side Doors. **£8,995**

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|---|---|---|
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| N | Volkswagen Caravelle - 7 Seats and Wheelchair Access - | £2995 |
| T | Daihatsu Hijet EFI - Rear Ramp & Winch - | £2995 |
| 99 | Suzuki Wagon R Liberty – Lowered Floor and Ramp System - | £5000 |
| V | Renault Trafic 1.9 Diesel, Rear Ramp, Low Miles - | £6495 |
| X | Volkswagen Transporter W.A.V - 1.9 Diesel & Rear Ramp - | £7495 |
| 51 | Nissan Vanette 2.3 Diesel - Rear Ramp & 4 Seats - | £7995 |
| X | Toyota Powervan 2.4D - Rear Ricon Lift, Low Miles - | £8995 |
| 02 | Suzuki Wagon R Liberty - Lowered Floor and Rear Ramp - | £8995 |
| 01 | Citreon Dispatch 1.9D – Full Lowered Floor and Rear Ramp - | £8995 |
| 99 | Fiat Ulysse MPV 2.0 JTD – Air Con and Lowered Floor – | £9995 |
| 03 | Suzuki Wagon R Liberty – Lowered Floor and Ramp - | £9495 |
| 02 | Volkswagen Transporter - 1.9D With Rear Ramp & Extra Seats - | £12995 |
| 53 | Kangoo 1.6 Automatic - With Air Con & Lowered Floor - | £11495 |
| 53 | Toyota Diesel Powerbus - Rear Lift & Seats - | £14995 |
| 03 | Mercedes Vaneo MPV 1.6 - Rear Lowered Floor - | £16995 |
| V | Mercedes V'Class 2.2 CDI Auto, Lux MPV, Leather, Lowered Floor - | £12995 |
| 02 | Mercedes V'Class 2.2 CDI Auto, Lux MPV, Leather, Lowered Floor - | £18995 |
| 53 | Chrysler Grand Voyager Liberty W.A.V – | P.O.A |
| 03 | Mercedes Vaneo MPV - Semi Auto Gearbox, Lowered Floor & Ramp - | £14995 |
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| N | Ford Transit Drive From the Wheelchair, Over £55000 when new - | £6995 |
| 52 | Chrysler Grand Voyager Drive From Wheelchair MPV – | P.O.A |

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All Makes and Models considered, finance settled
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Friesan Green, Invatravel Converted 7 Seater, Ricon Side Access Cassette Lift, Air-Conditioning, Alloy Wheels, Sunroof, Electric Windows & Mirrors. 1 Year Warranty from VW main agent.
**£10,995.00 including VAT.**
**Tel: 0131 473 9300.** TRADE

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We specialise in locating used vehicles to suit the specific needs of our customers. If you are looking for an accessible vehicle or have one to dispose of, contact Adam Price. We also supply and install all forms of access equipment.
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adamprice.avr@tiscali.co.uk

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**WARNING**
We have been warned about a scam involving people from overseas who say they want to buy a product and who offer to pay using cheques, Western Union money transfers and certified cheques. Although no *DN* readers to our knowledge have been hit by this, please be particularly wary of accepting cheques from overseas. For more information, visit the Metropolitan Police website.

**DISCLAIMER**
*DN* is not responsible for claims made in the adverts it prints. Readers are advised to check claims with advertisers before relying on them.

## • Holidays

**The Algarve, Portugal**
**Small hotel owned and run by English family. Home from home. Happy and friendly. Home cooked food. Diets catered for. All bedrooms en-suite. Our own swimming pool and grass bowling green. Golfing bookings can be made. We are fully equipped for wheelchair users, their families and friends. Met at Faro airport. For brochures and flights with A.T.O.L. agents, tel UK: 01 895 471 631, tel: 00 351 289 396589, fax: 00 351 289 394924.**
**www.emmets-ville.co.uk**

**PAIGNTON, DEVON**
Six Berth wheelchair accessible caravan within a mile of the beach. Site facilities include club, indoor and outdoor pools, sauna, steam room, free wheelchair loan, children's play area.
Tel. Devon ASBAH on 01803 522256 – www.dasbah.co.uk

**Cornwall – Nr Truro.**
2 newly converted barns on small family farm. Fully wheelchair accessible. Ensuite bedrooms. Sleeps up to 6. For details contact Esme Eyles 01726 883240 or www.treworgansfarm.co.uk

**Brittany Cottage** to let.
Adapted for wheelchair use.
Good access to beaches.
Sleeps up to 6.
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**Tel (01924) 499220.**
**www.brimartravel.co.uk**

**Dordogne – SW France**
Two stunning wheelchair accessible properties in the idyllic rural setting of Perigord Vert.
The Grande Maison sleeps up to 10, the Petite Maison up to 5.
Contact **Ed Passant** on **01233 731097** or **ed@accessholidays.com**
**www.accessholidays.com**

**PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL**
**"Holiday Care Award Winners"**
Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and daily meal service.
Please ring or write for colour brochure.
**R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Breward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617**
**www.penroseburden.co.uk**

An idyllic & peaceful cumbria beauty spot. The Tranquil Otter. Lux lodges with sauna & whirlpool bath/hot-tub, logburner. All lakeside position with picture book views. Outstanding w/c accessible lodges, paths, shops etc. Wheely Boat! 01228 576661. www.thetranquilotter.co.uk

***Burgundy***
**Beautiful** Bourgogne wine region, South-East France.
***Les Vignes de Louzy***
Large ground floor gite in a 150yr old substantial stone Farmhouse. Sleeps 2/4. Newly renovated. Specially adapted for disabled holidaymakers. Wheelchair accessibility. Large en-suite bedroom with 2 electric profiling beds and large specially equipped bathroom. Large open plan kitchen/diner/living room. Internal double garage with electronic door. Former vineyard with extensive grounds on the edge of a small village.
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**Website: www.jcgites.co.uk**

**Hartgrove Farm**
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Award winning holiday cottages on working farm. A really lovely holiday for disabled guests and their families. Glorious countryside and views. Logfires. C.H. Wheel-in shower. Mobile Hoist and other equipment.
**Tel: 01747 811830**
**www.hartgrovefarm.co.uk**

**Normandy France**
Magnificent accessible farm house in beautiful 1 acre garden. Sleeps 14 (6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms) huge G.F. ensuite bedroom, Wheel-in shower, bath, mobile hoist. Superb heated swimming pool, 25 mins unspoilt sandy beaches. Only 1 hr from port.
**Tel: 01747 812019**
**www.normandyfarmhouses.co.uk**

**Near Salisbury** – newly converted stable block self-catering units. Ground floor 1 double/twin bedroom en-suite wheel-in shower. Upstairs 1 double, 1 single, shower room. Open plan kitchen & living room. Patio & shared garden. ETB category 2, 4-star highly commended. Non-smoking. Prices from £195 pw. Available all year. Tel: 01722 349002, e-mail: mail@old-stables.co.uk, www.old-stables.co.uk

**10 MINUTES FROM DISNEYLAND**
Florida villa owned by paraplegic. Sleeps up to 12. fully accessible and large. King size bed with ensuite bathroom. wc and wheel-in shower. Large pool with water operated seat for a disabled person. A holiday you can take with confidence. Contact John Gillett on: 01805 601147.

**Disabled & Carers English Coastal Holidays**
Spaciously built for quadriplegic owner. Ceiling hoists Elec hi/lo beds Shower/toileting chairs etc 2 flats sleep 6 and 4 All mod cons stunning sea/mountain views Heysham, Morecambe Bay Caravan on sheltered site, balcony, pool complex Fishing boating lake. Filey Yorkshire Sleeps 4-6 Call Allan or Jan 01274 588142 for brochures

**Altinkum – Turkey**
2 & 3 Bed, Sleeps 6 & 8. Brand New Fully Wheelchair Accessible Luxury Accommodation on Holiday Complex. Includes, Ramps, 3 Pools, Hoist, Wheel-in Shower, Grab Rails, Raised Toilet, Wide Doors/Corridors and More. Visit www.DisabledDestinationAbroad.com
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Email carol@elmsfarmcottages.co.uk

**Norfolk, Nar Valley Holiday Cottages**
3 self-catering, all wheelchair accessible, 1 with wheel-in shower room, 2 with airbaths. Mostly en-suite. Electric bed. On working farm – peaceful location, central for beaches and tounst attractions. Indoor heated swimming pool
**More details and prices, contact: Rosemary on 01760 338797.**

**Cotswold Charm**
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Tranquil hamlet of Westington 600 yards from historic curved High Street
4 cottages, ensuite, sleep 3-6 each
Rick Cottage (6) – wheelchair access ground floor kitchen with adjust height table, etc., ensuite bed, lounge & conservatory
Hoist hire & specialist care, etc. available via links on our website
Web: www.cotswoldcharm.co.uk
Call Michael on 01386 840164. Fax: 01386 841883. Email: cotswoldcharm@fsmail.net

**GAER COTTAGES**
5* Quality self-catering cottages for ALL the family with an emphasis on facilities for disabled visitors. To cat 1, 2 & 3. 6 of the 9 traditional Welsh stone cottages are single storey, easily accessible from the car park. Luxurious indoor heated swimming pool with hoist. Games room. Holiday care award winners.
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01570 470275

• Recruitment (on page 26 to 31)

east THAMES

# Come together.

It's an exciting time for East Thames Group working in east London and Essex – our key areas of operation. With a focus on the Thames Gateway and the Olympics we are committed to more than double in size by the year 2012.

Part of East Thames Group, East Potential is one of the most powerful forces for regeneration in east London and Essex; we pioneer independent living, community involvement and employment and training initiatives.

We are currently looking to recruit to the following roles based in Stratford, east London:

**Human Resources Advisor** Ref: 060500659

£31,218 - £35,964

Acting as a Business Partner for the allocated areas of the Group, you will advise on the management of employee relations by providing a comprehensive HR support service to staff.
You will have a minimum of 2 years' generalist HR experience, excellent communication and presentation skills, as well as an ability to deliver required objectives within tight timescales.

***Arts Development Co-ordinator** Ref: ADC060500656

£28,005 - £32,004

You will be:

- Developing and delivering innovative arts programmes throughout the east Thames area
- Developing and promoting an Arts strategy and liaising with arts-focused organisations
- Participating in fund-raising bids
- Recruiting artists and creative trainers

We are looking for someone with experience of developing arts programmes and working with young people who is highly organised. Finally, you'll combine communication skills with an excellent contact base in the arts and creative industries.

**Closing date: 12noon on 14th June 2006 • Interviews and assessments: w/c 26th June 2006**

**To find out more about us, these roles and our excellent benefits please visit www.east-thames.co.uk or contact our recruitment team on 01403 892900 quoting the appropriate reference number.**

We welcome applications from people with disabilities and are equal opportunities employer.
* This post is subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check.

**www.east-thames.co.uk**

We are an equal opportunities employer.



## Make your next role as important as ours.

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government's fight against world poverty.

We offer opportunities in our headquarters in London and East Kilbride – but also in many developing countries, with staff based in DFID offices plus British Embassies and High Commissions around the world. We have roles for leaders; professionals; specialists; managers; graduates and administrators.

DFID is an equal opportunities employer and selection is on merit. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, ethnic minority groups and those with a disability. We will make any reasonable adjustments should they be required. Candidates should be UK Nationals, nationals of a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth citizens with the right to work in the UK.

**You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.**

DFID Department for International Development

**www.dfid.gov.uk**


## CONDITIONS

**Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw linage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.**

**Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.**

**Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews tel: 020 7619 7320, fax: 020 7619 7331.**

**Linage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Richard Gresham (see contact details above).**

**DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.**

• Public Appointment

NHS Primary Care Trusts

## Non-Executive Directors

NHS Appointments Commission

*£7,500 for 2½ days per month + expenses - Nationwide - No NHS or medical experience required*

Whatever, wherever, whenever. If you've gained senior professional expertise in the public, private or voluntary sector, you could make a positive difference to the lives of people in your community.
Becoming a Non-Executive Director of your local NHS Primary Care Trust simply needs dedication and the commitment to bring us your proven experience for just two and a half days each month.
It's a chance to influence, shape and drive the very future of healthcare in your community. To find out more visit

**www.experience2life.co.uk**

## • Recruitment (on page 26 to 31)

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

**Senior Investigation Officers | c.£33k + benefits | London** Every case can have a knock on effect. Not only will you decide if complaints about poor service from the NHS or government are justified. You'll also suggest how things should be put right where redress is deserved. And, you'll recommend ways to prevent the same issues arising again. Could your sense of judgement, proven writing skills and experience of analysing complex written material improve public services? Visit www.knockoneffect.org.uk to find out more and download an application pack. Tel: 0845 456 3204/05. Email: PHSO@barkers.co.uk Closing date: 7th June. We welcome applications from all sections of the community.

## • Accommodation


• Searching for accessible or adapted property?
• Accessible or adapted property to sell or let?
• Looking for an approved estate agent?
The Accessible Property Register
web: www.accessible-property.org.uk
Tel: 0114 2307058


## • Organic Farm


**Organic Food – Home Delivery**
Seasonal and Fresh, Certified Organic, Cut to Order and Delivered to your Door
Order online at
www.TheOrganicFarmersMarket.co.uk
or tel. 01884 840160
The Organic Farmers Market Ltd


## SEND US YOUR SMALLS...

...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 60,000 people for just £9 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

Office for Disability Issues
HM Government

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Help Change the way Government delivers for disabled people

**Disability Communications: External Relations**

# Senior Executive Officer (SEO)

£31,780 – 38,090 London, Ref: NLC 1423

Flexible starting pay may be offered depending on qualifications and experience

The Office for Disability Issues was launched on 1 December 2005 to drive the strategy to deliver equality for disabled people by 2025. We are looking for committed people with an interest in disability equality to work with us on this challenge. The following post is available on secondment or fixed term contract with a view to permanency. Disabled people are particularly encouraged to apply.

The post-holder will lead work to:

- Increase awareness of the rights of disabled people and build positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Bring Government Departments together to build an overall picture of Government strategy for disabled people, identifying themes and initiatives, and ensuring use of communications opportunities is maximised.
- Build relationships with external organisations, including the development of partnership working on media campaigns, events and other communications initiatives

To request an application pack, or for further Information (including a detailed job specification) please contact **Peter Mason** on **0191 215 2695**. Please quote reference **NLC 1423**. The closing date for applications is **09/06/06**.

*DWP offer a wide range of benefits including an excellent Pension Scheme, which gives the choice of final salary benefits providing you with the flexibility to choose the pension that suits you.*

*DWP is committed to providing services, which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity in our working practices with all our customers/colleagues and partners.*

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

RADAR
the disability network

**Is social justice and equality important to you?**

Join the fastest growing pan-disability organisation in the country and make your mark in the campaign for full social inclusion for disabled people.

RADAR (the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) is the leading pan-disability charity working to represent the views and expectations of over 10 million disabled people in the UK. RADAR's influence in legislative reform and social change is second to none. Our impact was felt in the recent Assisted Dying debate bringing focus to the human rights of disabled people. At present we are improving our membership communications to achieve maximum effect on a range of important issues such as welfare reform, education and accessibility.

**Membership Services Manager** c£25k pa

We are looking for an experienced, self-motivated individual to manage, develop and strengthen our membership services. Responsibilities include recruiting new members, retaining and building relationships with current members. In addition, you will organise regular visits to members around the country to establish and develop collaborative relationships – some travel and out of hours work will be required. The successful candidate will have at least 2 years experience in a similar role. This role is designated for a disabled person.

**Parliamentary Officer** c£25k pa

We are seeking someone to join RADAR's campaigns team to provide support to the Rt Hon Lord Ashley of Stoke CH, and the influential All Party Parliamentary Disability Group (APPDG). This includes helping to deliver regular meetings at the House of Commons, producing detailed minutes and providing briefings on all issues relating to disability and equality. Additionally, you will work as part of the campaigns team supporting the design and delivery of a programme of campaigns each year.

RADAR is an equal opportunities employer. We particularly welcome applications from disabled people.

For a full job description and further information about either of these posts please contact Georgina Saad on **020 7566 0112** or email **georgina.saad@radar.org.uk**. Please state if you require information in an alternative format.

To apply, please send your CV and a covering letter of application, clearly stating which post you are applying for. **Closing date: 16 June 2006**

Please note that first interviews will be held week commencing 26 June and second interviews week commencing 3 July.

Charity Number 273150

## DEADLINE

***DN Extra* June 2006 published 10 June. Classified deadlines: Booking and copy: 31 May.**

***Disability Now* July 2006 published 24 June. Classified deadlines: Booking: 9 June. Copy: 13 June.**

• Recruitment (on page 26 to 31)

## Birmingham Centre for Inclusive Living

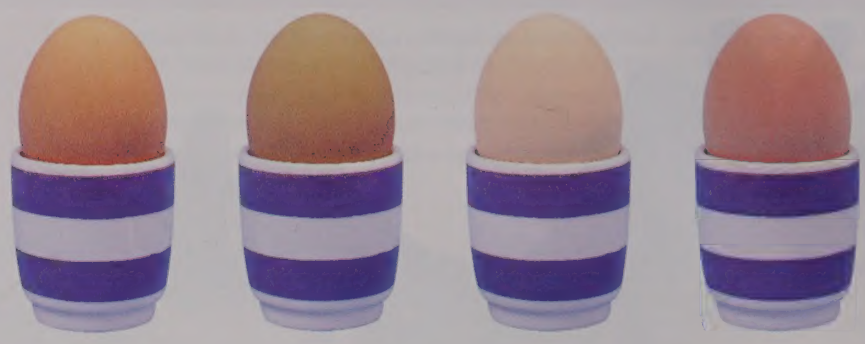
# CHIEF EXECUTIVE (20hrs)

Commencing Salary is £22,841 (NJC Grade – SP50)

The Birmingham CIL is a resource centre run by disabled people which promotes independent living issues for disabled people. In particular, we support disabled people, living in residential homes and other dependency-creating environments, who wish to move back into the community and lead independent lives. The CIL is seeking an experienced disabled person as Chief Executive to help them develop this much-needed resource. Candidates will have strategic management experience as well as experience in policy development, staff management, fundraising and finance and will be able to work effectively in partnerships with both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

An information pack (state preferred format) is available from: Natasha Cotterell, Birmingham CIL, Prospect Hall, College Walk, Selly Oak, Birmingham. B29 6LE. Tel: **0121 415 5500**. Email: **info@bcil.org.uk**

**Closing date for applications is 30th June 2006.**



## It's what's inside that counts.

We're committed to improving efficiency, effectiveness and equality in public services across England. We're also interested in quality people. To find out more visit our recruitment website at **www.stepup2ac.co.uk**

audit commission
www.audit-commission.gov.uk

# Chief Executive

Living Options DEVON

Full-time, based in Exeter.
Circa. £45K p.a.

Living Options Devon is a major player in the county's voluntary sector, unique in how we work with disabled and Deaf people to identify needs, challenge attitudes and achieve change to impact local, regional and national services.

Are you an inspirational, experienced leader with a dynamic attitude to marketing, fundraising and business development? Do you have the vision and energy to influence staff, service users and partner organisations to take an already successful, economically and operationally strong Organisation into a new level of growth?

Want this challenge? You must evidence:-

- Innovative and strategic thinking with outstanding communication, negotiation and networking skills
- An ability to combine strong business acumen with a commitment to the ethos of the Organisation and the voluntary sector
- Effectively leading organisational change and development
- Successful track record at an executive level with a range of management skills – strategic, operational, financial, human resources, risk, income generation and performance management

Application pack from: Sally Sparham, Resources Manager, email: **info@livingoptions.org**, tel: **01392 445666**. Please quote ref: DN Registered Charity Number: 1102489.

Closing date: Wed 5 July 2006
Interview date: Monday 24 July 2006

We welcome applications from disabled and Deaf people.

*The University of Kent frequently recruits for clerical assistants, technicians and IT assistants, administrative staff, research and lecturing staff across our faculties.*

***Staff who have a disability are currently under-represented and we wish to improve the diversity of our workforce. The University is a member of the double tick pledge and will interview all applicants who meet the essential criteria.***

**For information about our vacancies please check our recruitment website http://www.kent.ac.uk/registry/personnel/vacancies.htm.**

**For details in different formats, please apply to The Personnel Department. Textphone users please phone 01227 824145.**

*We actively promote equal opportunity in education and employment and welcome applicants from all sections of the community.*

KENT
UNIVERSITY OF KENT

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

At the University of Kent we have an international reputation for high-quality teaching, learning and research. We have 14,000 students across three campuses, including the pioneering new University of Kent at Medway and a planned capital building programme of £100 million over the next five years. This is your opportunity to be part of this forward-thinking and dynamic environment.

• Services

## BIRKDALE PAEDIATRIC & ADULT NEURO CLINIC

Advice and treatment from newborn babies to adults.
A wide range of conditions treated, some of these include movement, posture, balance, walking, coordination, hand-function and learning difficulties.
Specialise in cerebral palsy and neurological conditions.
Farshideh Bondarenko DIP PHYSIO MCSP SRP.

**web: www.neuro-physio.co.uk tel: 0208 998 9403**

• Recruitment (on page 26 to 31)

# Projects that keep 7 million people in motion.

## Opportunities in our Road Network Development Directorate

We keep people moving. That's what Transport for London's major transport and regeneration schemes are about. As part of our Road Network Development team, the decisions you make will influence every mode of transport throughout the capital – and impact on the 22 million journeys undertaken by Londoners every single day.

Perhaps understandably, this team has attracted some of the most talented and highly experienced engineers, many from outside London. Together, you'll rise to the challenge of designing, developing and delivering a strategically sound road network capable of sustaining our 7 million residents – and the 800,000 we expect to arrive over the next decade. Whichever role you join us in, changing and improving one of the world's greatest and historic cities will demand unprecedented creative thinking and superb project management skills. It'll also fuel your ambition for years to come.

We've a variety of opportunities in **project management, transport and development planning and engineering.**

Set the ball rolling: visit **www.tfl.gov.uk/rndroles** and if the challenges and roles inspire you then apply online. If you would like to speak to a member of our recruitment team, please call **0800 0155 072.** Please quote refs TfL2072 – TfL2080. Closing date: 4th June 2006.

**We want to be as diverse as the city we represent and welcome applications from everyone regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith or disability. Applications are especially welcomed from women since they are currently under-represented in this area.**

MAYOR OF LONDON

Transport for London STREETS

---

Regeneration

## Access Officer

**£33,942 - £39,738**

Southwark continues to be the focus of major redevelopment and regeneration activity with

- Major regeneration plans for transport interchanges at Elephant and Castle and London Bridge
- A new town centre to be created at Canada Water
- A whole district to be redeveloped in East Walworth
- A new tram system planned to link some of the most deprived areas in London to the centre
- Other major developments, environmental improvement and regeneration projects coming forward all the time.

We need an access officer to make sure that all these plans have the highest standards of accessibility. This will involve giving detailed advice on a wide range of projects as well as developing planning and transport policy. You will need experience of working on mobility and accessibility issues and detailed knowledge of legislation and best practice. **Ref: PT/000432**

**For an application form please phone the Regeneration Call Centre on 020 7525 5421 (24 hour service) quoting the job reference number or apply online at www.jobsatsouthwark.co.uk Alternatively email an application form to regenrecruitment@southwark.gov.uk when completed.**

**Closing date: 16 June 2006.**

Southwark Council

**www.jobsatsouthwark.co.uk**

valuing people, promoting opportunity

---

**Leonard Cheshire exists to change attitudes to disability, supporting 21,000 disabled people in the UK.**

*Creating opportunities with disabled people*

LEONARD CHESHIRE

## Communications Project Co-ordinator

£24,332 per annum

**Do you have excellent communication and project management skills?**

**An understanding of, and commitment to, the social model of disability?**

We are embarking on a national communication project, which will aim to further improve the lives of disabled people within our services by giving them the ability and confidence to express themselves and their choices.

Reporting to our Regional Director and either based at home or at our Regional Office in Banbury, Oxfordshire you will be responsible for the overall plan and implementation for this project, ensuring that the established project objectives are well defined, delivered and evaluated for effectiveness. Bringing your enthusiasm and drive, you will be required to build a team of support officers to work with individual service user's, identifying and tailoring a specific communication programme to meet their needs.

For further information please contact Marion Lambert, Regional Director, on 01295 816600. For an application pack, please contact the HR Dept, Leonard Cheshire, 30 Millbank, London SW1P 4QD. T: 020 7802 8295 E: recruit@lc-uk.org

Application packs can also be downloaded from **www.leonard-cheshire.org**

**Closing date: 9 June 2006.**

We welcome applications from disabled people.
All vacancies are subject to standard or enhanced disclosure.

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

THE SUNDAY TIMES 20 BEST BIG COMPANIES TO WORK FOR 2006

• Services

ROYAL DEVON & EXETER NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
Mardon Neuro-Rehabilitation Centre NHS

## MARDON NEURO REHABILITATION CENTRE

*Wonford Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4UD. Tel: 01392 208580/2 Fax: 01392 662929*
*email: www.Joan.Collcott@rdehc-tr.swest.nhs.uk*

Mardon specialises in neurological rehabilitation assessments and treatment programmes for people with neurological conditions and brain injuries. The centre provides a consultant-led, multidisciplinary team that offers a wide range of health services for individuals with neurological conditions. The team also work closely with families and carers. Mardon promotes health improvements relevant to individuals over the age of 16 years and works with other agencies to help facilitate re-integration into the community.

Out of area referrals, legal and insurance work welcome. Brochure is available upon request.

---

## New look and new products

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Enable Select is a leading online disability shop offering products which can not be found elsewhere. From adult bibs and feeding aprons with sleeves to swimming jackets, hats and verruca socks.

Now includes swimming nappies and plastic pants for all ages.

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**Meeting the needs of your disability NOW!**

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Different by Design

VW Caravelle Executive

Top of the range luxury with the award winning Caravelle range. Up to six seats, manual or automatic with several different engine sizes, as well as rear or side wheelchair access.

VW T5 Cruiser MkII

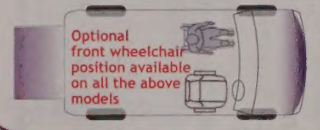
Based on the stylish and spacious VW T5 windowvan. With 4-8 seats (including wheelchair user)and available in manual or automatic, short and long wheelbase with three different roof heights.

VW Shuttle SE

Affordable luxury the all new Shuttle SE comes with high grade interior and the Lewis Reed unique seating system 4-8 seats, short and long wheel base, available with manual or automatic gearbox.

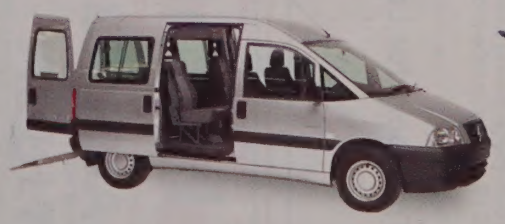
Seating Options

With a wide range of seating configirations available.




Renault Kangoo

Citroen Dispatch



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